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ECCLESIOLOGY

EDITORIAL

ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE SYRO -MALABAR QURBANA Thomas Mannoorampampil
ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS OF INDIA: ECCLESIOLOGICAL HERITAGES AND PERSPECTIVES

BEFORE THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY Joseph Kallarangatt
METROPOLITAN CHURCH SUI IURIS: JURIDICAL STATUS AND
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BOOK REVIEW, NEWS

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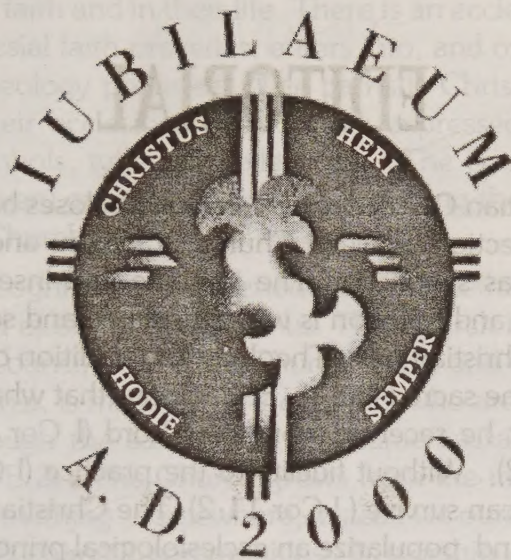
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May the Great Jubilee bless you
to bear the torch of Jesus Christ in your hearts
to enlighten the entire Ecclesia
to be united and dynamic
in the challenging situations
of the New Millennium!

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EDITORIAL

This issue of Christian Orient on ecclesiology discloses before us the fact that there is a close connection between Church, tradition, and liturgy. In the East they are often used as synonyms. The intimate and inseparable relation between Church, liturgy and tradition is well articulated and scientifically explored in Traditions of the Christian East. Theology and tradition of a Church are most eminently rooted in the sacred liturgy. St Paul says that what he handed over (1 Cor 11 : 2) is what he received from the Lord (1 Cor 11:23) through the Church (1 Cor 15:1,2) . Without fidelity to the practice (1 Cor 11: 14), that is tradition, no Church can survive (1 Cor 11:2). The Christian Orient always tries to protect, promote and popularize an ecclesiological principle - loyal and open to the past, present and future-through its theological and scientific studies. Fidelity to the genuine sources of Christianity is the breeding ground of Christian Orient's theological interpretations. Churches like individuals, have an innate desire to determine their identity and establish the basis for their independence, unity and communion.

Studies on the Church continue to increase. At the same time, the sector covered by ecclesiology also widens . Since the Second Vatican Council there has been a deep integration of many theological disciplines and fields, which have enriched our understanding of the Church . The Church had been studied and evaluated from different perspectives and angles. Taking into consideration the proliferation of writings on the Church the twentieth century is named as the century of the Church . The explicit concern of the Constitution LG is ecclesiology. The Church's rediscovery of herself can be seen there. This rediscovery is rooted in the two pillars-biblical and patristic sources. All the images by which the NT expresses it convey this. The NT speaks of the Church as a building, vine , flock, bride, and body , always in relationship to Jesus Christ . In the Fathers we find numerous treatises or sermons on the divine persons on the Incarnation, on the Redemption, and even on the Sacraments , but it would be difficult to find there even one work that could be considered simply as a systematic study on the Church as such. It is not because the Church had a secondary

significance in them. The contrary is closer to the truth. They placed the church ubiquitously, in their faith and in their life. There is an ecclesiological 'a priori' in their theology : ecclesial faith precedes, enters into, and organizes the concrete knowledge which theology possesses. The patristic Christocentrism is actually inseparable from their ecclesiocentrism. They expressed the mystery of the Church through symbols, types and allegories . The Second Vatican Council has succeeded to a very great extent in re-establishing the biblical and patristic foundations of the Church.

The Church is recognized and experienced as something 'within' us, not as some machinery that exists over against us. The Church is an organism of the Holy Spirit. As the Council says "That Church , Holy and Catholic, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit through the same faith, the same sacraments and the same government....." (OE 2) . The Church grows from the inside towards outside. The Church is not something , somewhere, instead we ourselves are the Church. The Church lives in Eucharistic communities . Its worship is its constitution. The Eucharist makes the Church while the Church itself is being constituted by the Eucharist. They are inseparable. Eucharistic ecclesiology is the age-old pattern of the Christian East. Liturgy manifests the Church itself. The Church is best expressed at her liturgy. To have a mutilated liturgy is to have a handicapped Church. Liturgy mirrors the Church.

This issue covers three scholarly studies on the mystery of the Church from three different perspectives. Dr Thomas Mannooramparampil approaches the mystery of the Church from the point of view of liturgy especially the Holy Qurbana text of the Syro-Malabar Church. He proposes a liturgical ecclesiology. It is a solid study and analysis of the nature of the Church basing on the patristic and theological interpretations of the text of the Holy Qurbana . The study of Dr Joseph Kallarangatt is a theological and ecclesiological interpretation of the precious and venerable heritages of the St Thomas Christians of India . The various ecclesiological principles of this Christian community are systematically coordinated in this study. The third article is ecclesiological and canonical as well. It is titled as ' Metropolitan Church *sui iuris* : Juridical Status and Power of Governance' by Fr Thomas Kuzhinapurath . It is a scientific work basing on the Oriental Code and the status of the Metropolitan Church with particular reference to the Malankara Catholic Church in India.

ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE SYRO-MALABAR QURBANA

The term 'Church' is used several times in the text of the Qurbana. It has several meanings according to the contexts of its use. Liturgy is the most sublime act of the Church. Therefore it will be useful to examine the idea of the Church in its various dimensions and its relation with the liturgy.

The Meaning of the Term

The English term Church as well as its Scottish equivalent 'kirk' and the German word 'Kirche' is derived from the Greek word *Kyriakon* which is the neuter adjective of *Kyrios*. *Kyrios* means Lord and therefore *Kyriakon* signifies 'belonging to the Lord'.

Church Building

The term was used by early Christians to signify the place where the Christians met together or the house of God. *Thesbohta* prayer says: "Let the feet which have walked in the Churches walk in the region of light."¹ In the *Onitha d'Qanke* which is sung during the procession from the sanctuary to the *haikla* God is prayed to sanctify the church: "O Saviour, sanctify your church kindly and cause your grace to reside in the church dedicated to your honour and set in it your holy altar whereon, O Lord, your Body and your Blood are to be sanctified" (R.14). Firm faith in the special presence of God there is very well expressed in the

introduction to the *onitha d'qanke*. "Before the glorious throne of your majesty, O my Lord, and the seat, high and exalted, of your excellence, and the awesome *bema* of the power of your love, and the propitiatory altar where your glory dwells" (R. 14). The *sogitha* of the Church of Edessa depicts the church-building as the dwelling place of God and therefore it is holy.² According to *Didascalia Apostolorum*, in the place of the Jewish temple the Christian Church has become the temple of God because God abandoned the Jewish people and their temple. It says: "And He has removed (Himself) and abandoned the people, as it is written in Isaiah that He has abandoned His people, the house of Jacob... It demonstrates that God had abandoned the people of the Jews and the temple, and has come to the Church of the Gentiles."³

Symbolism

The Church symbolises the whole cosmos.⁴ The expression 'heaven and earth alludes to this truth. Comparing to the tabernacle of the Jews the *Liber Patrum* says: "The Church is the type of both worlds. The temple is the present world, and is like the outer sanctuary of the tabernacle of the covenant into which the priests, deacons and the assembly of the people always enter. The altar or the sanctuary is indeed the type of the future world, and

1. *Order of the Solemn Raza of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Trivandrum 1986) 65. Hereafter quoted as R.
2. *Sogitha*, str.1 Cfr.K McVey, *The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol*, Dumberton Oaks Papers 37 (1983) 96.
3. A.Vööbus ed.& tr., *Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, CSCO 408 (Louvain 1979) 208-209
4. A.Dupont-Sommer, *Une hymne Syriaque sur la cathédrale d'Edesse*, Cahiers Archéologiques 2 (1947) 33

of the 'holy of holies' of the tabernacle of the covenant into which once a year the high priest entered".⁵ The sanctuary represents heaven, *gestroma* is the paradise and *haikla* is the whole earth. The bema in the middle of the haikla symbolizes the earthly Jerusalem and the altar in the middle of the bema is called galgotha. The passage between the bema and the sanctuary is called sqaqona which is opened in three places: before the sanctuary, in the middle and before the bema. It is a way of truth. Those who want to enter heaven should first come to Jerusalem (bema), believe in the holy Scriptures and accept the law and commandments of Christ and begin the journey to heaven.

The sanctuary is in the Eastern part of the church which is built in the East-West direction. George of Arbel gives cosmological, Christological, eschatological and soteriological arguments to justify the Eastern Orientation in prayer.⁶ He summarises them thus: "Towards that we adore and contemplate, just as towards the superior place, the place of life, the place of the saints, the place from where we were expelled, the place from where rises the sun, from where we have the origin, the place raised by the Lord God through the prophets".⁷ The main door of the Church is traditionally on the southern side. The reason given is that the door of the temple of Jerusalem was on the southern side because the Jews entered the promised land after crossing the river Jordan which was in the south. Crossing the river

meant for them baptism in the river as a prerequisite to enter the promised land. Therefore entrance from the south signifies that one has to receive baptism in order to enter the Church and to take part in the liturgy. George of Arbel comments on this: "The door is baptism. From baptism we may begin, from that we enter to the mysteries. When we come directly to the Church to enter, we enter by the southern side, and thus we directly receive baptism and go to mysteries which are at Jerusalem, so these lead us into paradise which is the *gestroma* and from paradise we enter into heaven"⁸

The veils have also much symbolic importance. They symbolize the boundary between heaven and earth: "The veils are the doors of the sanctuary and of the holy of holies. They are the figure of the firmament separating us from heaven. The opening of the veils and the bringing out of the cross is like the removing of the firmament on the day of resurrection when Christ appears."⁹ The lamps which hang in the middle of the sanctuary and in the haikla symbolize this world and heaven: "The lamp which we kindle in the temple at the time of prayer and extinguish at the end of the prayer, is the type of (this) world, and is like the old law which had a beginning and an end. However, the lamp inside (the sanctuary) which is kept (burning) and not extinguished, is the type of the future world and (is similar) to the Christian Law which has no end."¹⁰ Let us see how the church which is the community of believers is presented in the Qurbana.

5. J.M.Voste, ed & tr., *Liber Patrum*, Fonti, serie II, fasc. XVI: Caldei-Diritto antico III, (Vaticano 1940) 36

6. R.H.Connolly, ed & tr., *Anonymi auctoris expositio officiorum ecclesiae Georgio Arbelensi vulgo adscripta*, CSCO sri, series secunda, tom.92, Vol.I (Roma 1915) 88-89

7. Id.90

8. Id.93

9. Id 37

10. d 37.

Temple of God

The concept of the temple of God is not restricted to the church-building alone. Man in whom God dwells is the temple of God. During the litany of forgiveness the celebrant mentions the effects of the Holy Communion: "so that we may be perfect witness of your glory, pure sanctuaries in your honour, holy temples fit for your habitation" (R.58).

Community

The Christian community which is named by Christ 'Church' (Mt 16:18) officially came into being after the ascension. This term is now used in several meanings: 1. as a local congregation, 2. universal body of the faithful 3. a particular denomination of believers like the Orthodox Church 4. an organization of the faithful related to a particular area or nation, for example the Indian Church.

The term Church occurs in the text of the Qurbana several times. The basic themes of the fourth G'hantha are the Church and the sanctification by the Holy Spirit who dwells in her. The creed recited in it defines the characteristics of the Church: one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic (R.39). The fourth kussapa prays for the entire holy Catholic Church (R.48). The prayer after the anaphora requests: "Establish, O Lord, your peace and tranquillity in the four corners of the world and especially in the holy Catholic Church" (R.51). The prayer of imposition of hands asks: "Lord, our God, stretch out your right hand of mercy on the Catholic and Apostolic Church which is spread from one end of the earth to the other" (R.31). In the karo-zutha after the Gospel reading we ask grace from the Lord for the Church (R.28).

In relation to Christ or to God it is called "your Church or 'his Church'". We pray: "Lord God almighty, yours is the holy Catholic Church" (R.31); "We thank you and glorify you, unceasingly in your Church" (R.15, twice). We recite: "glory be to him in his Church" (R.60), "Praises be sung in his Church" (R.69).

The Church invites the faithful to receive the Body and the Blood of the Son (R.63). The karo-zutha before the litany of forgiveness invites: "Let us participate in the mysteries of the Church" (R.57). The prayer of consignation throws light on the fruit of the Holy Communion: "May they (the divine mysteries) be unto us and to the holy Church of Christ, O our Lord, here and in all places, for the pardon of offences" (R.55).

The following prayers seem to be a recognition of the plurality of sister Churches or of the fact that Catholic Church is the communion of individual Churches: "For peace, harmony and stability of the whole world and of all Churches we beseech you" (R.26): "May I administer to your people ... the peace and tranquillity of all the Churches" (R.40).

Redeemed Community

As Israel became the people of God through the blood of the old covenant, the church was founded by the blood of the new covenant (Mt 26,28; Mk 14,24; Lk 22,20; 1 Col.11,25). This fact is confessed in the words of Institution: "This is my Blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins" (R.47). St Peter reminds us: "Remember the ransom that was paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the precious blood of a lamb without spot or stain, namely Christ".¹¹

11. 1 Peter 1,18-19.

The Acts of the Apostles warns the pastors to be on their guard to feed the Church of God which he bought with his own blood¹². In the book of Revelation those who stand in front of the throne of God are washed by the blood of the lamb (Rev 7,14). The prayer of imposition of hands acknowledges this fact: "Lord, God Almighty, yours is the holy Catholic Church, the sheep of your flock, which was redeemed by the great passion of your Christ" (R.31). The Church as the community of those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ renders praise and thanks: "For all this great and admirable dispensation toward us we will thank and glorify you unceasingly in your Church redeemed by the precious Blood of your Christ" (R.51).

Community of Reconciliation

Liturgy especially the Holy Eucharist is the means to get reconciled with God and men. The first penitential rite in the post-anaphora aims at the reconciliation between God and man whereas the second penitential rite is intended to seek reconciliation between men. We find several prayers which request for the pardon of offences and remission of sins. Washing of hands and incensings are specially meant for forgiveness of sins. The propitiatory nature of the Eucharist is often recalled in the prayers of the Qurbana.

People of God

The Greek word in the N.T. for the English word Church is *Ekklesia* which means an assembly. The religious use of this term outside the N.T. is found in the Septuagint where it is the translation of the Hebrew word *Qahal*. It is the adjective 'of the Lord' that gave the meaning 'people of God'.

Israel became the people of God through the covenant at the foot of mount Sinai which brought an interior union between Israel and Yahweh. By it Israel became the people of God and Yahweh became their God (Ex.20,2; 19,4-6). Sealing this covenant by sprinkling blood, half on the altar and half on the people Moses proclaimed: "This is the blood of the covenant, which Yahweh has made with you." (Ex.24,8). Blood is the carrier of life (Lev.17,11). The mutual sprinkling of blood meant that God shared his life with the people and they entered into union with God. Thus they acquired the status of being the people of God. That was the meaning of the covenant sacrifice. The Church believes that she is the new Israel in the place of the old Israel. The new covenant was sealed in the blood of Christ as it is confessed in the Institution Narrative of the Qurbana. This conviction that the Church is the people of God is expressed several times in the text of the Qurbana. The prayer before the onitha d'qanke says: "O Lord, we, your people ... kneel, worship, give thanks and glorify you..." (R.12). In the prostration service deacon says: "O Lord, Jesus, shade over and remain upon your people" (R.34). The prayer of entrance to the altar says: "that I may administer to your people" (R.40). The fourth kussapa prays: "O our Lord and our God, deal with your people and with me according to your mercies" (R.49). The final blessing is imparted in the following words: "Upon you, His people ... may He pour out His blessings" (R.69).

Let us examine some metaphors which are used to explain the meaning of the 'people of God'.

Flock of God

The metaphor of the flock is connected with the concept of the people of God in the Old Testament. For example, Ps.100,3 says: 'Know that He, Yahweh, is God. He made us and we

belong to him. We are his people, the flock that he pastures'. God feeds His fold as Genesis says: "God who feedeth me from my mouth until this day (Gen.48,15). God says: "I will feed my sheep and I will cause them to lie down" (Ez 34,15). As Israel is that flock of God (Jer.13,17; 23,1-4; 31,10; Ez 34 etc), the Church as the new Israel is the flock of God (Jn.10,1-16; Acts 20,28 f; 1 Pet.5,2 f).

As the following prayers which address God testify, the Qurbana presents God as the good shepherd and the Church as the sheepfold: "we, your people and the sheep of your pasture sing to you holy" (R.12); "May this incense ... obtain remission of debts of the sheep of your flock" (R.14); "Sheep of your flock which you have chosen for yourself" (R.30); "Sheep of your flock, which was redeemed by the great passion of your Christ" (R.31); "May I administer to your people, the sheep of your flock remission of your debts" (R.40). "O good shepherd who set out to seek us and found us when we were lost" (R.52); "Upon you, his people the sheep of his flock may he pour out his blessings" (R.69).

Christ is addressed as the true shepherd (Jn. 10,8; 1 Pet 2,25 etc). He laid his life for his sheep. He is the good shepherd who seeks his lost sheep and rejoices when he finds it. Therefore we pray in the Qurbana: "O Lord Jesus, shade over and remain upon your people and the sheep of your fold" (R.34); "O good pastor who have gathered your sheeps, remit our debts by your body and blood"¹³; "Behold the true pastor who suffered for us prepared for you the celestial mystery" (R.102-103). These prayers elucidate God's care over His people and the absolute confidence of the Church on Him

Body of Christ

St Paul uses the metaphor of head and body to show the relation between Christ and the Church. The human body of Christ was a great instrument for our redemption. By dying he destroyed in his human body the sin and rising again he restored in his resurrected body the original divine life. Those who come in contact with his glorified body through baptism and eucharist (1 Cor.12,13; 10,14-22) can participate in the risen life (1 Cor.25,45). Since Christ transmitted the fulness of his resurrected life to the Church, she became His second body. Since the divine life flows from Christ, St. Paul calls him the head (Col 1,18; Eph.1,22-23). The firm faith that the Church is the mystical body of Christ is reflected in the text of the Qurbana: "You have rendered us, in spite of the bitterness of our weak nature, worthy to become recognized members in the great body of the holy Catholic Church" (R.31).

We can draw three important truths from this metaphor. They are the unity, diversity and mutuality in the Church. The Church is one although its members are many. Since each member is an individual, there is a basic diversity in the Church. The human body needs the co-operation of its members and each member is associated with other members. So also each member is related to Christ who is the head and to each other (Rom.12,5; Eph.4,25).

Pilgrim Church

The Christian life is a liturgical procession of pilgrims to arrive at God in the sanctuary and to stand before Him. This sanctuary is the sanctuary of heaven where angels and those

13. *Supplementum Mysteriorum sive Proprium Missarum de Tempore et de Sanctis juxta Ritus Ecclesiae Syro-Malabarensis* (Romae 1960) 67

people who are saved are gathered together in a festive assembly.¹⁴ The Church is a pilgrim people who are on the way to heaven in order to receive Jesus Christ their God who is seated at the right hand of the Father. This eschatological idea is expressed in different ways in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana.

Facing the East

That the celebrant as the leader and guide of the liturgical assembly turns to the East together with the congregation signifies the pilgrim nature of the Church. If the celebrant and the community face the altar even if it is not in the Eastern side of the Church, it can express this pilgrim nature, the celebrant and the community, standing in the same direction, facing the altar.

The east is presented in the holy Scripture as the dwelling place of God (Ps.68,33). His voice is heard from there and God travels from there to the West (Ps.68,5). He enters the temple from the East (Ez.43,1-5). God is light (Ps.36,9; 97,3; 104,1-2) and comes to us from the East (Ps.9,2). Fulfilling the scriptural expectations Christ predicts how he will come on the last day: "Coming of the Son of man will be like lightning striking in the East and flashing far into the West (Mt.24,27). The first Christian community took this scriptural passage very seriously. The Apocalypse of Peter while speaking about the parousia says: 'As the lightning that shineth from the east unto the west, so will I come upon the clouds of heaven in my glory while my cross shall go before my

face".¹⁵ Early Christians used to paint the image of the cross on the eastern wall of their houses and to pray before it with their face turned towards the East.¹⁶ On this practice J. Danielou comments: "The purpose of the cross is to indicate the eastern wall, for the emphasis is first and foremost on praying towards the East, not on prayer facing the cross"¹⁷

Syriac *Didascalia* states basing on this scriptural passage: "The Apostles, therefore, constituted: pray towards the East, because "as the lightning which lightens from the East, and is seen even to the West, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be, "that by this shall we know and understand that He appears from the East suddenly."¹⁸ Abdiso shows the importance of the practice of facing the east: "The custom of worshipping toward the East is the subject of an apostolical canon, and is founded upon that saying of our blessed Lord: As the lightning cometh forth from the east ..."¹⁹ L. Bouyer observes: "The East, as the place of the rising sun, for the early Christians was the only fitting symbol of the last appearance of Christ in His parousia, as that sun of justice sung of already in the *Canticle of Zechariah*"²⁰ The primordial paradise from where mankind was expelled is the paradise of our eschatological hope.²¹ Therefore turning to the East is the symbol of the God-centeredness and heaven-centeredness of Christian life. It is also hailed as an Apostolic tradition and a law of prayer.

We are reminded of what the "Instruction" of the Oriental Congregation of January 6, 1996 says: "It is not a question, as is often claimed,

14. Cyprian Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* (Minnesota 1976) 258

15. *Revue de l'Orient Chretien*, V (1910) 209.

16. S.E. Assemanus, *Acta Martyrum*, II (Roma 1748) 125.

17. Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, I (London 1964) 268-269

18. *Syriac Didascalia* 36-37

19. Abdiso, *Marganitha*, in G.P. Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals*, II, p. 413

20. L. Bouyer, *Liturgy and Architecture* (Notre Dame 1967) 28-29.

21. Expositio I, 88; Abdiso, *The Book of Marganitha (The Pearl) on the Truth of Christianity*, tr. E. SHIMUN (Ernakulam 1965) 65

of presiding the celebration with the back turned to the people, but rather of guiding the people in pilgrimage toward the kingdom, invoked in prayer until the return of the Lord. Such practice, threatened in numerous Eastern Catholic Churches by a new and recent influence, is thus of profound value and should be safeguarded as truly coherent with the Eastern liturgical spirituality."²² The Final Judgement of 1985 from the same Congregation says: "The Eucharist celebrated versus populum (turning to the people) runs counter to the basic approach to worship in any Eastern tradition worth the name".²³

The whole structure of the Qurbana presupposes this Eastern Orientation in prayer and the prayers and rubrics get their full meaning only when the celebrant and the community turn to the East and to the altar during the liturgical celebration and especially during the eucharistic celebration. Some people ask: "Is it essential to turn to the East? If not, let us turn to the people." These people who think in scholastic terms mean to ask whether turning to the altar or to the East is necessary for the validity of the sacrament. For them the recitation of the Words of Institution over the gifts is what is necessary for the validity of the Eucharist. Other elements are not necessary. This is called accessory theory which the Church has rejected. The question to be asked is whether it is necessary for a meaningful celebration. The answer is definitely 'yes'. The second question generally asked is: "Are you sure that turning to the altar will continue till the end of the world? If not, let us turn to the people". This question gives the false impression that turning to the people which was introduced in

some dioceses a few years back will continue for ever. This is a false presumption.

The entrance of the celebrant into the sanctuary instills in us the hope that we will one day enter heaven. Holy Eucharist is the food of the pilgrim Church as manna was for the Israelites in the desert on their way to the promised land. The fifth g'hantha in the anaphora of Nestorius reflects this truth: "Grant us, O Lord, that we may live before you in this abode of our pilgrimage, in sincerity of love, in purity of thoughts, possessing an accurate knowledge of the truth of the faith in You, and partaking of your awful, holy and divine mysteries, so that when we shall stand before the dreadful judgement seat of Your Majesty we may not be ashamed or found guilty. As in this world You have made us worthy of the ministry of Your awful and holy mysteries, so in the world to come, make us worthy to partake with unveiled faces of all those blessings that neither pass nor waste away. When You shall bring to an end those things which we possess here as in a mirror or figure, may we there possess openly the holy of holies in heaven."

To show the pilgrim nature of the Church the metaphor of journey by sea or land is often used. The metaphor of ship with Christ as its helmsman is very popular in ancient Christian literature. For example, Hippolytus of Rome describes the Church as a ship sailing in the sea towards the East: "The sea is the world in which the Church is set, like a ship tossed in the deep, but not destroyed, for she has with her the skilled pilot, Christ... And she bears in her midst also the trophy over death; for she carries with her the cross of the Lord. For her prow is the east, and her stern is the

22. Nr.107

23. Nr.40

west, and her hold is the south, and her tillers are the two Testaments..."²⁴ In the Acts of Thomas Christ is the haven in a sea of trouble.²⁵ Narsai has the following comparison: "In the ship of the Church he (the priest) stands and gives warning night and day; and he keeps it from the harms of the wind of evildoers. He is an exceeding skilful steersman amid the billows, and he knows how to sail to the berth of life without end. With rudders of the Spirit he steers the reasonable ships; and he makes straight their course to the harbour of life that is hidden in the height".²⁶ Early Christians used to build churches in the shape of a ship and the arrangements of the places for the participants in it were as if in a ship. As a people on the way the Church belongs to the present. But at the same time it belongs to the future. It is in the world but not of the world. This characteristic of the Church is found in the prayers of the Qurbana. The *Apostolic Constitutions* gives the following details of a church-building: "When thou callest an assembly of the church as one that is the commander of a great ship, appoint the assemblies to be made with all possible skill, charging the deacons as mariners to prepare places for the brethren as for passengers, with all due care and decency. And first, let the building be long, with its head to the east, with its vestries on both sides, at the east end, and so it will be like a ship. In the middle let the bishop's throne be placed, and on each side of him let the presbytery sit down; and let the deacons stand near at hand, in close and small girl gar-

ments, for they are like the mariners and managers of the ship: with regard to these, let the laity sit on the other side... In the middle, let the reader stand upon some high place..."²⁷

Bride of Christ

It is a metaphor used to show the pilgrim nature of the Church.²⁸ The Old Testament makes use of the metaphor of marriage in order to show God's love for his people. (Is 54,5-6; 62,4-5; Jer 7,34; 16,9; 25,10; Hos 2,19-20; 3,1-3; Ez 16,22;). The N.T. also employs the same metaphor to elucidate the relation between Christ and the Church (Mt 9,15; 22,10; 25,1-13; 2 Cor.11,2; Eph.5,23,25; Rev.19,7-9). The Constitution on the Liturgy presents the Church as bride at least three times²⁹. The liturgy depicts the Church as bride of Christ, bride of Jesus our Saviour, bride of Jesus the high priest, adorned bride, glorious bride, heavenly bride, chosen bride etc.³⁰ She is the bride who eagerly awaits the coming of the bridegroom as the introduction to 'Lord of all' indicates: "May we be found worthy to receive from heaven the manifestation of your beloved Son and to thank you and praise you unceasingly in your Church, crowned like a spouse..."³¹

The liturgy shows the eschatological glory of the Church as a marriage banquet: "The Son of God has made a great wedding feast for the Church which he betrothed".³² The banquet of the earthly Church is the holy Eucharist. Therefore we say: "For the guests at your banquet,

24. Hippolytus of Rome, *The Antichrist* 59

25. A.F.J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas* (Leiden 1962) 84

26. Narsai, *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, R.H. Connolly, tr. TS 8 (Cambridge 1909) 65

27. Book II, Sect vii.

28. A. Verheul, *Introduction to the Liturgy* (Minnesota 1968) 83-90

29. SC 7, 47 and 84.

30. P. Bedjan, *Breviarium Juxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium id est Chalaneorum*, Vol III (Roma 1938), 411,416,419- 422,391,394,410

31. Raza 15

32. Bedjan III, 432

heavenly bridegroom, you have prepared the chalice of your precious blood" (R.61). The fifth Sunday of Denha proclaims: "In the marriage banquet of the bridegroom his living body is distributed."³³

As a part of the marriage celebration the bride enters the bridal chamber. The prayer of the season of the dedication of the Church states: "Our Lord has built for the Church a spiritual bridal chamber."³⁴ The desire to enter there is expressed in the huttama: "O Lord, accept and make (Him, her, them) worthy to enter the bridal chamber of your kingdom..." (R.70).

Church the Queen

Christ is hailed as king in the liturgy and therefore the Church His bride is the queen. On the feast of the Sacred Heart we sing: "O Church the queen, give thanks to Christ the Son, who suffered for you and gave you as dowry the blood which he shed from his side for you."³⁵

Church the Mother

The figure of the Church as mother of all the faithful developed already in the N.T. (Gal. 4,21-31) and in the book of Revelation (Ch.12). It is a very popular theme in the Fathers of the Church and in ancient literature. He who has not the Church for a mother cannot have God for father, says St Cyprian.³⁶ The *Liber Graduum* pictures the Church as the mother who begets children for the Church in heaven³⁷. According to Narsai the Church as the spiri-

tual mother prepares the spiritual food for the spiritual nourishment of the baptized Christian: "As milk he sucks the divine mysteries, by degrees they lead him, as a child, to the things to come. A spiritual mother (Church) prepares the spiritual milk for his life and instead of breasts she puts into his mouth the body and blood".³⁸ She feeds the faithful with the Word of God, sacraments and sacramentals. She imparts God's love to her children and protects them.

The diptychs of the Qurbana says: "For all the children of the Church that are found worthy to receive this offering in your sight.. may this oblation be accepted" (R.43). The fourth g'hantha mentions 'all the children of the holy Catholic Church who had been signed with the living and life-giving seal of holy baptism' (R.50).

As a universal mother she is concerned with the well being of the whole world and prays for it in different ways. The fourth kussapa is a typical example of this concern when she prays for the Holy Father, bishops, priests, rulers who are in authority, all those who mourn and are in distress, all the poor and oppressed, the sick, the afflicted and all the dead (R.48-49). The first kussapa prays for the remission of debts, forgiveness of sins, salvation of souls, reconciliation of the whole world and tranquillity of all the Churches (R.40). Diptychs is said for all the classes of people living and dead (R.40). Prayers are offered in the karo-zutha for peace, harmony, stability of the whole world, and of all churches therein, for a temperate climate, and for the prosperity of the whole world (R.22-26). Holy Eucharist is offered for the renewal and salvation of mankind (R.7).

33. *Supplementum* 35

34. *Bedjan* III, 397.

35. *Supplementum* 116

36. *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate*, Ch.VI, Epistle 74, nr 7

37. *Liber Graduum* 12:2: cf. also R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (Cambridge 1975), 265,142-154.

38. Sermon XXI,p.52.

Church as Paradise

Another image to express the future glory of the Church is that of paradise (Rev.2:7). Ancient Christian literature presents the Church as the fulfilment of the promise made in the original paradise and as a type of the eschatological paradise. The tree of life in the first paradise was the type of the Eucharist. St. Ephrem makes a comparison between the paradise and the Church."

He planted the garden most fair
He built the Church most pure
The assembly of the saints
is like to paradise

There every day is picked
the fruit of him who gives life to all
There, O my brethren, are pressed
the grapes for the Medicine of life.

The creator saw the Church
and was pleased;
He resided in that paradise
which she had planted for His honour
just as He had planted the garden for her
delight.³⁹

He does not make a strict distinction between the primordial paradise, the present Church and the eschatological Church. The first paradise which was closed because of the sin of Adam was reopened by Christ and the first one to enter there was the good thief. The Church hopes to find her fulfilment by attaining the happiness there: "Make us worthy to sing your praises with the thief in paradise, in company with the just who do your will" (R.64).

Church as Kingdom

The text of the Qurbana refers very often to the kingdom⁴⁰. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven mean the same thing. Jesus made the kingdom of God present in this world and taught us to be subject to it. Kingdom of God is the content of his Gospel. He commissioned the disciples to preach the message of his kingdom. Through it he explained the means to establish the right relation with God and fellow beings. He taught to pray for the coming of the kingdom (Mt.6,10; Lk 11,12). He also says that this kingdom has already come (Lk 11,20; Mt 12,26). Kingdom of God will come with power (Mk 9,1). It is at hand (Mk 1,15) He says: "The kingdom of God is among you (Lk 17,21). We have to prepare for kingdom (Lk 13,24). These scriptural passages indicate the different aspects of the kingdom in the world. The kingdom of God has begun in those who received Christ and live according to his will. This kingdom will grow and will reach its fulfilment in the end of time. The Church is that people who receive the Gospel of Christ and lead the new life. Therefore the Church can be said to be the kingdom of Christ. He has founded it and works through it. St Paul says: "He has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son that he loves and in him we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins" (Col 1,13-14).

The Syriac term *malkuzha* (kingdom) is a very popular word in the early writings and is often used to signify the Church in her eschatological glory. Although the Church is the kingdom, she will be the perfect kingdom only at the parousia. If we examine the different uses of this term in Aphrates⁴¹ we realize that he is aware of the already and not yet character of the kingdom and therefore of the pilgrim and eschatological nature of the Church.

39. H. Parad 6.8.10

40. R.40,46,49,54,55,58,62,68,67,69

41. Dem. XIV,684:8-10; XXI,965:8-16; III,136:4-7

St Ephrem sees three stages of the kingdom. The first stage is of promises and is called the stage of mysteries. The second stage is the fulfilment of the first stage and is called truth. It is in the Church. The third stage, which is the kingdom, is the final fulfilment. The Church is the sacrament of the kingdom in the world. She knows that the kingdom has been fully realized in her. She is the pilgrim community and moves to the eschatological fulfilment. This doctrine was summed up in Nisibis 5,23: "The Type was in Egypt, the reality in the Church and the sealing of the reward (will be) in the kingdom".

Imagery of Way and Voyage

Comparing the history of salvation to a way St Ephrem divides it into three stages: "It extended from Eden to Zion, from Zion to the Church and from the Church to the kingdom. The kingdom of God is to be understood in a progressive sense. It was already present in Jesus but had to undergo a progressive development until we come to the final stage. In this sense it is identified with the Church.⁴² In view of the interim period between the beginning of the kingdom in Jesus and its end Jesus set the Church. The Church is the anticipation as preparation for the community of God in the future kingdom.

As the anticipation of the future kingdom she is already under the reign of God. He will be with her till the end of the world and will lead her. It is in this sense we understand the texts: "May the grace of God be with you and with us and with all those who receive him in the kingdom of heaven" (R.62). The following prayers are a reflection of the need of the pres-

ence of Christ in the Church: "By your grace, O Lord, be present in our midst, as you were with the Apostles" (R.34); "O Lord who lead the Church to the eternal bliss, remain in the Church according to the promise: Behold I am with you till the end of the world" (R.188).

Jerusalem Above

St Paul describes the Church as the 'Jerusalem above' (Gal.4:26) to show the eschatological glory. God spoke to his people in Jerusalem. It is for this new Jerusalem, which is the Church, that Christ shed his spiritual life on humanity. It is the city of salvation. All have to enter there in order to be saved. The image of the holy city, new Jerusalem is used to describe the Church in Rev.21,2: "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming as a bride adorned for her husband." She is the heavenly Jerusalem but on earth with the same characteristic as in heaven. It is the worship which angels render to God that characterises this city. This idea is reflected in the prayer: "O Christ, you established the Church on earth as the type of the heavenly Jerusalem and exalted her to sit in the banquet hall on high".⁴³ The Church is waiting for her eschatological joy: "You, baptized, sing a song of praise. Dance, rejoice at the bridegroom with whom you should experience joyful hours in the Jerusalem above".⁴⁴ The huttama refers to the same truth: "Make us worthy of the magnificent glory of his kingdom of eternal joy with his holy angels and of confidence in his presence, granting us to stand at his right hand in the Jerusalem on high" (R.69).

42. Bauer, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology* (London 1970), 461

43. Bedjan III, 399

44. Id. I, 426

Worshipping Community

The Greek word *ekklesia* literally means a people who have been convoked. It was applied to the people of Israel, especially when they were gathered for religious purpose. Through the covenant at the foot of mount Sinai Israel became a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Ex.19,6; Dt.4,20; 7,6;28,9). The relation between God and Israel was expressed in the context of worship and sacrifice. They had to be a praying people in order to become a covenant people. Worship and sacrifices (2 Chro.29,23.28), celebration of feasts and prayers were very fundamental to the existence of Israel as a priestly people.

N.T. references show that the term *ekklesia* assumed a technical sense of being a specific Christian community applying also to the universal Church (Acts 8,1-3). Like the O.T. *ekklesia*, the N.T. *ekklesia* also is God's people (1 Pet 2,9). It is God's because God calls it. The members of the Church are God's elect (Rom.8,33, Col.3:12). It is the new Israel (Gal.6,16). So her life should be a life of prayer, worship and sacrifice. It is a community of worshippers (Jn.4,23-24). Vikloi Warnach rightly observes: "The Community finds its highest fulfilment in priestly service (1 Pet 2,5; Rev.1,16;5,10) that is, in the liturgical worship and so the Church is conscious of itself as a cultic community (Eph.3,21; Heb.12,22 f). Since she is a holy people,"⁴⁵ the prerogatives of the O.T. people passed to the new Israel. Therefore St Peter says: 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you

out of the darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2,9). The Christian community is a priestly community. It is a *plebs sancta*, the holy people of God, and its most beautiful and most sacred task is to glorify God in its cult, to worship the Father in Spirit and Truth⁴⁶. The metaphor of bride also helps us to understand the worshipping nature of the Church. Liturgy is the encounter between the bridegroom (Christ) and his bride (the Church). Therefore it is a very fundamental function of the Church to be a cult community. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy says: "In the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the mystical body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the head and members"⁴⁷. Therefore it is the action of the whole Church. It continues: "Every liturgical celebration because it is an action of Christ the priest and His body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can match its claims to efficiency, nor equal the degree of it"⁴⁸. It is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows"⁴⁹.

It is in the liturgy and in connection with it that we know what the Church is. It is the expression of the faith of the Church. If so, it is intrinsically connected with the divine Tradition. We may note what the last part of the fourth G'hantha says: "We also... received by tradition the example which is from you." St Paul received from the Lord (1 Cor.11,12) through tradition what the Lord did and said in the institution of the Eucharist and delivered it to others. In the same way the Church received by tradition the details of the celebra-

45. Church in Bauer *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, 110

46. J.A.Jungmann, *Early Liturgy* (London 1980)18.

47. SC 7

48. Id

49. Id.10

tion of the Eucharist from Christ. This reception by tradition may be understood in relation to the preceeding part of the prayer of the remembrance of the just and holy Fathers who were pleasing before God and of the prophets, the Apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, the doctors, the bishops, priests, deacons and all the children of the Catholic Church (R.49-50) who were instrumental for the transmission of the tradition of example from Christ.

Liturgical tradition is the part of the divine Tradition. Divine Tradition is Revelation itself. It is the handing over of the mysteries of salvation to the Church. Divine Tradition should be understood in the light of the two natures in Christ which are unconfused and at the same time unseparated. This means that we can have the divine Tradition only in the form of traditions. The mysteries of worship which are the content of Tradition do not grow or change. The historical dimensions of liturgical Tradition are expressed in traditions which possess Tradition. These traditions are the forms in which the Church lives the divine Tradition and renders it visible. Therefore Serge Heitz rightly notes: "In the liturgical assembly the Church lives divine Tradition today by means of the historical traditions which express it. For our part, we cannot dismantle traditions, break them up into parts as it were, in order to make a choice of components in accordance with abstract ideas and principles and then to construct a liturgy and a worship according to the more or less preconceived ideas of contemporary man as seen through the spectacles of philosophies now popular".⁵⁰

All the aspects of the Church are related to the liturgy. It reveals the inner dimension of the Church. We experience what the reality of

the Church is from the ideal form of the liturgical celebration. It builds up and manifests the Church. Fundamentals of faith are contained in it. There is no Church without the liturgy and there is no liturgy without the Church. It is the praying Church that is the genuine Church.⁵¹ Liturgy is the most important factor of the identity and individuality of the Church. It is the source of her theology.

Liturgical Assembly

At the liturgical level the term *ekklesia* means primarily the liturgical assembly as a sign and realization of the universal Church as the mystical body of Christ. In this sense we can say that the liturgical assembly is the first sign of the presence of Christ at the sacramental level as Ignatius of Antioch says: "Where Jesus Christ is there is the Catholic Church"⁵². There is no liturgy without the assembly. The normal and ordinary sacramental sign of the liturgical action is always a liturgical assembly. Christian liturgical assembly is the heir of the cultural dimension of the chosen people as a community convoked and gathered together by God to receive salvation and to exercise the true cult (Ex.19). It is a gathering of the faithful in the name of Christ under the presidentship of an ordained minister for worshipping God and celebrating the fundamental events of their salvation.

The fact that liturgy is the celebration of a particular liturgical assembly is well brought out in the rites and prayers of the Qurbana. Almost all the official priestly prayers are in the first person plural. The fourth G'hantha says: "We also, O my Lord, your weak, frail and miserable servants who are gathered to-

50. Serge Heitz, *Reflections on the Contemporary Liturgical Assembly*, in Mathew J.O'Connell (tr), *Roles in the Liturgical Assembly* (New York) 161

51. A. Nicholas, *The Shape of Catholic Theology* (Edinburgh 1991) 181

52. Smyrnaeos 8.2

gether in your name... rejoicing, glorifying, commemorating and celebrating this awesome, holy, vivifying and divine mystery of the passion..." (R.51). This 'we also' is connected with the third G'hantha: "We also, your weak, frail and miserable servants are gathered together.." (R.49). 'We' here means the liturgical assembly. The prayers present the participants of the liturgy as a congregation assembled in the Church before the holy altar in the name of Christ to celebrate His redemptive mystery.

The Christian community formed after the ascension of Christ was in the form of a worshipping assembly.⁵³ St. Luke reports that the Apostles joined in continuous prayer, together with several women including Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers (Acts 1,13). The glorified Christ is present with them. The descent of the Holy Spirit on them inaugurates in this community the movement of thanksgiving (Eucharist) which is the basis of the Christian worship. The Acts of the Apostles says: "They remained faithful to the teaching of the Apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2,42).

The fact that N.T. identifies the assembly with the Church (Act.2,47; 1 Cor 11,22) does not mean that the Church exists only when it is gathered in an assembly. The Church exists only in as much as its members have been called to the assembly and remain ordered to it. Gregory Dix observes that the word *ekklesia* (Church) during first three centuries never meant anything but liturgical assembly or by extension those who have a right to participate in it⁵⁴. *Ekklesia* refers actually to an assembly actually gathered in prayer, that is, to a locally

gathered community.⁵⁵ The Church is present wherever she assembles for divine worship, she baptizes, offers the Eucharist and proclaims the Word of God. The ideal is that there can be only one Eucharist for the entire local Church as St Ignatius of Antioch teaches: "Be careful, then, to participate in only a single eucharist, for there is but a single flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and a single chalice that unites us to his blood, and a single altar, just as there is but a single bishop with his presbyters and deacons".⁵⁶ Unity in the forms of prayer, in rubrics, in songs etc. is a sign of the unity within the same Church.

The liturgical assembly is the expression of the universal Church. The Constitution on the Church no 26 rightly says: "The Church of Christ truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called Churches in the New Testament. For in their locality these are the new people called by God, in the Holy Spirit and in much fullness. In them the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated, "that by the flesh and blood of the Lord's body the whole brotherhood may be joined together. In any community existing around an altar, under the sacred ministry of the bishop, there is manifested a symbol of that charity and unity of the Mystical Body, without which there can be no salvation. In these communities, though frequently small and poor, or living far from any other, Christ is present. By virtue of Him the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church gath-

53. cf. Joseph Lecuyer, C.S.S.P, *The Liturgical Assembly: Biblical and Patristic Foundations*, in *Concilium*, Vol .2, No.2 (1965), 3-9

54. Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London 1970) 336

55. G. Diekmann, *The Place of Liturgical Worship*, in *Concilium* Vol.2 (1965), Burns and Oates, p.35.

56. Ad Philad 4

ers together." Rahner's statement that the whole Church exists in the local Church gathered together before the altar⁵⁷ is very relevant. In itself the liturgical assembly is the sign of the living reality of the whole Church, says SC 2: "The liturgy is thus the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly endowed, eager to act and yet devoted to contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it. She is all these things in such a way that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek (Heb.13,14). Day by day the liturgy builds up those within the Church into the Lord's holy temple, into a spiritual dwelling for God (cf. Eph.2,21-22) - an enterprise which will continue until Christ's full stature is achieved (cf. Eph.4,13). At the same time the liturgy marvelously fortifies the faithful in their capacity to preach Christ. To outsiders the liturgy thereby reveals the Church as a sign raised above the nations (cf. Is.11,12). Under this sign the scattered sons of God are being gathered into one (cf. Jn 11,52) until there is one fold and one shepherd (cf. Jn 10,16)."

Communitarian Celebration

Salvation which is offered to the faithful is basically communitarian and ecclesial. In order to show this truth even the celebrant priest was not allowed to receive the Holy Communion by himself in the East Syrian Church. He had to receive it from another person. The

Council throws light on the fact in the following words: "It has pleased God to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people"⁵⁸. Since liturgy which is the source of redemptive grace, is the act of the whole Church it calls for the active, conscious, full and intelligent participation of all the participants according to their ranks, offices and states of life. We should be illumined by the teaching of Vat.II in this regard. It states: "Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the "sacrament of unity"... Therefore liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church; they manifest it and have effects upon it; but they concern individual members of the Church in different ways, according to the diversity of holy orders, functions, and degrees of participation"⁵⁹. "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such a participation by the Christian people as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (1 Pet.2,9; cf. 2,4-5) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism..."⁶⁰ The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful... should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a proper appreciation of the rites and prayers they should participate knowingly, devoutly, and actively"⁶¹. The Council instructs that a communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful is to be preferred to a celebration that is individual and quasi private.⁶²

57. Nuovi Saggi, III (Roma 1969) 485

58. LG 9

59. SC 26

60. SC 14

61. Id. 48

62. Id. 27

The structure of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana demands for a meaningful celebration - the active participation of all the participants. There are prayers and rites reserved to the main celebrant, concelebrants, assisting deacons, other servers and faithful. The community responds to the prayers of the celebrant and to the proclamations and instructions of the deacons. The celebrant requests the prayers of the community and they pray for him. There are also prayers which all recite together.

The aim of the restoration and renewal of the liturgy is to bring about the active participation of the faithful. To realize this end all should have the genuine spirit of the liturgy, cherish great love for it, should learn the meaning of the rites and prayers and should get proper training. The Council warns that "it is futile to entertain any hopes of realizing this goal unless the pastors themselves, to begin with, become thoroughly penetrated with the spirit and power of the liturgy, and become masters of it".⁶³ The main cause of the liturgical crisis which rocks this Church is the lamentable ignorance of and lack of proper liturgical formation in their own genuine liturgy. They have become prey to the baseless propaganda that it is foreign, archaic and full of Nestorian errors. Such a propaganda is aimed at creating in the minds of the faithful aversion or even hatred against their own liturgy. If they are deprived "of the primary and indispensable source from which they are to derive the true Christian spirit"⁶⁴ their spiritual life will be weakened. Therefore the authorities concerned may heed to the instruction of the Council: "It

is vitally necessary, therefore, that attention be directed, above all, to the liturgical instruction of the clergy".⁶⁵ "Life in the seminaries and houses of religion will be thoroughly influenced by the spirit of the liturgy"⁶⁶; "Secular and religious priests... are to be aided to live the liturgical life and to share it with the faithful entrusted to their care";⁶⁷ "With zeal and patience, pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful and also their active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally"⁶⁸

Heavenly Church and its Liturgy

The glorified Church in heaven and the Church on earth are not two separate entities. They are the two phases of one Church. The earthly phase is the downward extension of the heavenly Church. The book of Revelation says: "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying: Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself will be with them" (21,2-3). The real Church is the heavenly one where real liturgy takes place (Heb.9,24; 12,22; Rev.11,19; 15,8). The heavenly Church and her liturgy are the source of the earthly Church and her liturgy.⁶⁹ There is only one liturgist who is Christ and there is only one liturgy which is that of Christ. The earthly liturgy is the shadow and figure of the celestial liturgy of Christ.⁷⁰ There is only one sanctification as it is brought about in the Christians by Christ. There is only one worship and it is offered continuously by Christ through

63. Id. 14

64. Id.

65. Id.

66. Id. 17

67. Id. 18

68. Id. 19

69. L.G. 12.2

70. Lonappan Arangasserry, *Ecclesial Dimensions of East Syrian Liturgy* (Kottayam 1990), 88-89

them. If the earthly liturgy is the true sanctification and true worship it is because it effects the same sanctification and renders the same worship as Christ does in heaven. Christ exercised his high priesthood during his earthly life and had its culmination in the paschal mystery. Now he continues the exercise of his priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary. That is why in the dialogue prayer the celebrant says: "Let your minds be on high". The answer is: "Toward you, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, glorious King" (R.44). Fathers of the Church claim that God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel is Jesus Christ and so the participants are asked to raise their minds to Jesus Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. George of Arbel comments: "In purity and sanctity come and approach these mysteries which you see on earth, consider them to be in heaven; and let your minds be in heaven."⁷¹ The *Liber Patrum* sees nine grades of priesthood on earth corresponding to nine grades of angels in the heavenly choir. In this economy of salvation from Pentecost till parousia this celestial priesthood reaches us and is made present in the Church and by means of her in the liturgy. *Vat.II* teaches us: "To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in His Church especially in her liturgical celebrations."⁷²

Christ occupies the prime place in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana. It is the exercise of the high priesthood of Christ. It is the celebration of "the divine mystery of the passion, death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ" (R.50). The content of the Holy Eucharist is "the mysteries of precious Body and Blood of Our Saviour" (R.56,54,42,40). It is He who accepts the

sacrifice (R.37). and sanctifies the sacrifice (R.41). He sanctifies the Church kindly and causes graces to reside in it (R.14). He is the Lord, God, king of ages, Saviour, preserver of life, quickener of our bodies, splendour of the glory of the Father, image of the person who begot him, light of the world, life of all, procurer of our salvation, provider of all things etc. We are mindful of what Christ has done for us. For example the third G'hantha says: "You put on our humanity in order to vivify it by your divinity and have exalted our low state, raised us who are fallen, vivified our mortality, forgiven our debts, justified our sinfulness, enlightened our knowledge, condemned our enemies and granted victory to the weakness of our frail nature.." (R.48). We pray for different graces from Christ. For example the community prays: "May Christ hear your prayers and accept your Qurbana and so make splendid your priesthood in the kingdom of heaven. May he be well pleased with his sacrifice which you offer on your behalf..." (R.49).

Christ is the high priest both on heavenly and on earthly altars, as Narsai says: "A holy temple and a holy of holies He adorned, He fashioned a sanctuary on earth and a holy of holies in heaven above. In the earthly sanctuary He commanded that (men) should perform the priestly office mystically; and in the heavenly also with same works, without doubt. Two institutions He made in His incomprehensible wisdom; and He filled them with temporal and everlasting riches. An earthly abode He called the earthly sanctuary; and a holy of holies He called that institution which is hidden in the height. A twofold sanctuary His love showed to the sons of His house; and he taught them

71. *Expositio* II,51

72. SC.7

how to consecrate it mystically... After His likeness He taught them to perform the priest's office for He (performs it) in heaven, and they on earth mystically."⁷³

The sacrifice is also identical because of the identity of the victim on both altars: "Behold He is sacrificed on the altar and at the right hand of the Father who sent Him and where He is one and is not divided. He is everyday sacrificed above and in the Church for our debts without undergoing passion. Come let us holily approach the sacrifice of His body which sanctifies all and let us all together cry out to Him... We see on the holy altar the lamb of God who is every day sacrificed mysteriously while He is living forever. He is being divided to all without being annihilated and diminished."⁷⁴

The offering of the priest who represents the true priest in heaven is valid only because it is accepted at the heavenly altar of the high priest. The Supplementum says: "The body and blood of propitiation are offered here on the holy and sanctifying altar in the middle of the Church and then will be accepted on the glorious and spiritual altar which is the true altar in heaven"⁷⁵.

In the liturgy heaven is present and adorers are elevated to heaven. It is the vertical dimension of the liturgy that makes it an anticipation of the eschatological liturgy. Commenting on the sanctus George of Arbel says: "Heaven and earth have been already made one Church; neither heaven is heaven nor earth is earth because the time and space composite have been dissolved; for heaven is the heaven of earth and earth is the earth of heaven. Cer-

tainly, unless there was a heaven above, there might not be an earth below, and unless there was an earth below, there might not be a heaven above. Now that those above and those below are brought into a single Church, there is neither "above" nor "below". And yet, God appeared on earth, and our nature ascended into heaven; and when God descended to us, earth became heaven; and when the Son of our race was elevated, heaven became earth. Wherefore heaven and earth have become one, and there is neither heaven nor earth; and we were already constituted with the spiritual ones. It is their predication itself-holy, that we recite as being perfected through resurrection."⁷⁶

Angels, the dead and the living become one Church and the eucharist is the occasion to express their unity. That the Church prays for the dead in the onitha d'raze, karo-zutha, at the time of the entrance of the celebrant into the sanctuary, diptychs, fourth kussapa and final blessing for the dead indicates that the living can help the dead and have the obligation for the same.

The liturgical assembly feels the presence of the Holy Trinity. They are aware of the presence of the angels with them. George of Arbel says: "Today we, angels and men, become a single holy Church, and in Christ we have been made one flock"⁷⁷. In the hymn of fraction we sing: "His ministers who do his will, the cherubim, the Seraphim and the archangels, stand with reverence and awe before the altar and watch the priest who breaks and divides the Body of Christ unto the forgiveness of sins" (R.54). They constitute one adoring community with them. The qanona of Our Father says:

73. Narsai 61 - 62

74. Bedjan II, 350

75. Supplementum 179

76. Expositio II, 55

77. Id. 51

"Angels and men cry out to You: holy, holy, holy are you" (R.6-7).

When we join our prayers with those of angels they become more powerful and acceptable to God. Therefore the prayer before the anthem of the sanctuary says: "Before the glorious throne of your majesty, O Lord, we... with thousands of cherubim who sing "alleluia", to you and tens of thousands of seraphims and archangels who sing to you "holy" kneel, worship, give thanks and glorify you..." (R.12). The Anthem of the mysteries says: "Let us sing his praises with the angels 'holy'..." (R.35).

The second G'hantha says: "O my Lord, Thousands of those on high bow down and worship your majesty. Myriads upon myriads of holy angels, host of spiritual ministers of fire and spirit, glorify your name; and with the holy cherubim and the spiritual seraphim they offer worship to your Lordship" (R. 45). The third kussapa says: "Mingle, O my Lord, the voices of our feebleness with the hallowing of the seraphim and of archangels. Glory be to your mercies who have associated the earthly with spiritual beings" (R.46). The third G'hantha begins: "And with these heavenly beings we give you thanks..." (R.46). The heavenly beings join with the earthly church in the worship of the Eucharist: "Together with the priest and the people the seraphim glorify and sing praises in loud unending hymns to the Body that is prepared and the chalice that is mixed" (R. 48). Prayers allude that the presence of the heavenly beings in the Eucharist creates hope in the faithful that they can join with them in the life after death. The first kussapa says: "When you shall manifest yourself at the end of time in that humanity of ours which you assumed, we may find grace and mercy in your sight and be made worthy to sing your praises with the hosts of angels" (R.66).

The Church cherishes the hope that she can join with the saints who lived for Christ and obtained the heavenly crown of glory: "We, being united to the Body and Blood of your Christ may, together with all the saints, shine brightly at his great and glorious manifestation" (R.58). The karoazutha of the deacon before the anaphora says: "May God who will crown them at the resurrection of the dead grant us, with them, firm hope, together with a participation and life and inheritance in the kingdom of heaven" (R.39-40)⁷⁸.

To sum up, the term "Church" is used in the sense of universal Church, particular Church, local Church, liturgical assembly etc. Several metaphors are used to elucidate the intrinsic nature and intimate relation between her and Christ. The Church is basically a worshipping community. What makes a community a Church is her worship. Her spirituality is necessarily liturgical, that is, it is based on and is derived from liturgy. We worship God in liturgy as members of the Church and therefore this spirituality is ecclesial and communitarian. One has to participate in it actively, fully and intelligently in order to get full fruits from it. As a pilgrim people she will reach her goal only when she will enter the heavenly sanctuary where she will continue her worship together with the heavenly beings.

Thomas Mannooramparampil

78. cf. also Pauly Maniyattu, *Heaven on Earth*, 40-41

ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS OF INDIA

ECCLESIOLOGICAL HERITAGES AND PERSPECTIVES

BEFORE THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

This is a theological study, which brings out the various ecclesiological aspects of the St Thomas Christian heritage (of the Syro-Malabar ecclesial tradition). The St Thomas Christian ecclesiology is different from the systematic ecclesiology of the western model. This ecclesial tradition was developed outside the Greco-Roman sway, in the Persian continent. It forms a living segment of the Syriac Orient¹. St Thomas Christian Ecclesiological perspective is a synthetic approach to the mystery of the Church. It is a living experience of the faith in Christ, the Saviour. Hence it is a soteriologically determined Christology and ecclesiology. There is a saying that history is the navigator of theology. It is actually a historical approach and a historical perspective that directs the course of theology. This is all the more true with regard to the St Thomas Christian ecclesial tradition. Liturgy is the matrix of this ecclesial heritage. Apostolate of St Thomas is the formative ground of its ecclesial identity. This tradition is the living memory of that Church. Its spirituality is the breeding ground of its ecclesial vision. To make a leap in the field of ecclesiology a retrospective look into the meaningful traditions of this ecclesial community would be helpful. Therefore to get a critical and balanced appreciation of this ecclesial heritage we have to travel through several main roads and then come to a synthetic approach to this. One should not

seek an ecclesiology of this tradition elsewhere. Among the Thomas Christians there was an uncorrupted view of the Church. Their consciousness of the Church was a living one. It was not a reflex, scientific, and systematic consciousness. They placed the Church all round in their Christian life. The sense of the Church was never disconnected from their ordinary life. The Church was a body of people praying and doing penance. In short we could say that the St Thomas Christian ecclesial heritage is a living spirituality. This is a unique Christian tradition, which articulates an integral ecclesial vision rather than an ecclesiology proper in the modern sense of the word. We have a deep and authentic ecclesiology, which focuses on the faith traditions of the Church. The identity of this Church is to be sought in these elements of faith. It shows that Church is the Way of authentic Christian life. Its ecclesiology is to be culled out from its biblical fidelity, its liturgy, tradition, priestly formation, catechesis, Christian life, spiritual motivations, devotion to the apostle and apostolic tradition, devotion to Virgin Mary, to saints and martyrs etc. Hence it is a synthetic whole.

India: Land of Apostolic Theology and Apostolic Tradition

The ancient Thomas Christian community in India has a prestigious and glorious position.

1. For the details of "Syriac Orient" Cfr. S. Brock, "The Syriac Tradition" in C. Jones et al. (eds), *The Study of Spirituality* (London: 1986), 199-216.

We have a firmer and steadier tradition of St Thomas. According to tradition the apostle Thomas evangelized India and he is the founder of the Thomas Christian Church. The ecclesial identity of a Church is vested in the tradition which comes from the apostles through the Fathers and which is part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church.² The essence of a Church is apostolic tradition and apostolic faith.³ Speaking about the apostolic tradition of the Malabar Church Cardinal Tisserant says: 'the ancient Christianity of Malabar is a living witness to the early messengers of faith'⁴. The mission of St Thomas in India is recorded even in the very ancient documents.⁵ There was a very ancient evangelization started by St Thomas the Apostle, and mainly in South India.⁶ "Since early times, at least since the fourth century there is general agreement in the West and in India as to the coming of St Thomas to this country (India).⁷ "Christian communities existed in the first centuries, not only at Mylapore, but further South down to Cape Comorin and in Malabar...Kaveripattanam, Vaipur, Vembar etc. were inhabited by St Thomas Christians".⁸

Therefore India can be named as the land of apostolic theology and tradition par-excellence. As Vatican II says: "and of these (the various eastern Churches) many glory in taking their origins from the apostles themselves".⁹ Christianity in India is practically as

old as Christianity itself. The venerable tradition of the Church is that St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, came to India in 52 A.D. , preached the Gospel and established the gospel communities or Christian communities here. The ancient Christian community has the glory of being one of the most ancient Christian Churches in the whole Christendom. The apostolic individuality of the Malabar tradition is something to be jealously guarded. The deeply rooted apostolic tradition is the key factor in the individuality consciousness of the Thomas Christians. It serves as a living symbol of the unbreakable link between the apostle and the present day community.

The apostles provided the primary link between Jesus Christ and the Church. Their witness to Jesus' teaching, his miracles, and above all to his death and resurrection were foundational to the mystery of the Church. In that perspective a direct apostolic touch to a Church is an unrepeatable reality. An apostle is an eyewitness to Christ and a direct witness to the formation of the Christian community. Their contribution to the founding of a Church is incomparable. He constitutes a real tradition. A Church can be practically identified with that tradition.¹⁰ The apostolate of St Thomas and the uniqueness of the earliest gospel communities occupy the central thrust of the Acts of Judas Thomas,¹¹ *Rambban Pattu*(Song), *Margham Kali Pattu*, *Veeradian Pattu* , *Panham*

2. OE 2.

3. Y. Congar, *Tradition and the Life of the Church* (London: 1964), 107.

4. Cardinal Tisserant, 'Preface' *Clergy Monthly* 16(1952), 161.

5. W. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents* (London: 1864), 33.

6. Cardinal Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India* (Bombay: 1957), 10.

7. E.R.Hambye, "St Thomas and India", *Clergy Monthly* (1952), 375.

8. H. Hosten, *Antiquities from San Thome and Mylapore* (Calcutta: 1936), 573.

9. UR 14.

10. Mar Joseph Powathil, "Church as Tradition", in Paul Pallath (ed), *Church and Its Most Basic Element* (Rome: 1995), 91-106.

11. For Details, J. Kallarangatt, "Acts of Thomas Deserve More Theological Attention" *CO* 17(1996), 3-18.

Pattu etc. The very existence of the St Thomas Christian community itself is the tangible sign of this apostolic tradition. This tradition has been largely shared by the Fathers of the Church like St Gregory Nazianzen, St Ambrose, St Jerome etc.¹² A reference to the Church in Malabar can be seen around the middle of the fourth century in the story of Theophilus the Indian.¹³ The first truly circumstantial mention of a Church of St Thomas in our Modern India is made by western travelers of the lower Middle ages: Marco Polo (1293), John of Monte Corvino (1291), Friar Oderic (1325), the Papal Legate Marignoli who visited the tomb in 1349, Nicolo Contian merchant who arrived in Mylapore in 1440 etc.¹⁴ Speaking to a crowd in New Delhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said: "St Thomas the apostle preached the Gospel in India right from the beginning of the first century. In this matter we have a tradition, a tradition stronger any history".¹⁵ The tradition which a church maintains is that of Christ. This tradition comes to a community from an apostle through liturgies and the writings of the Fathers. This tradition is actually the memory of a Church. This memory is expressed through various elements like liturgy, spirituality, theology, cultural integrations etc. It is the Way of the Church. In antiquity the St Thomas Church is equal to the Roman Church. The apostolate of St Thomas in India, his martyrdom there, and the transference of his relics to Mesopotamia form a matter of traditional belief among the Chris-

tians of India.¹⁶ Nicolo de Conti an Italian merchant who visited India several times between 1415 and 1438 says that there were thousand Christians then living in Mylapore. Here the body of St Thomas lies honourably buried in a large and beautiful Church.¹⁷ Pope Paul VI says: "according to a very ancient and common tradition, St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, preached the Gospel in India and died a martyr there".¹⁸

The Varthamanapusthakam, an outstanding ecclesiological treatise, brings out the deep apostolic devotion that Mar Cariattil and Paremmakal kept. They prayed before the tomb of the apostle before their tedious journey to Rome. "After two days we began visiting the holy places connected with the apostle St Thomas. At Chinnamala we saw the cave in which the apostle out of fear of the heathens, lived and said mass, and saw the small Church built over it. A little away from the Church we can see the footprint of the apostle on a rock into which is cut a small cross. We saw these and kissed the footprint".¹⁹ "By the infinite mercy of God and by the merits of the apostle St Thomas, its first apostle and founder, our community has until now followed faithfully as far as it could, its customs and the rite of our forefathers".²⁰ Not all particular Churches or any mission Church can claim a distinct apostolic origin and distinct continuity as Malabar Church can. Four feasts were kept in honour of the apostle St Thomas: the first Sun-

12. For details, A.C. Perumalil, *The Apostles in India* (Patna: 1971), 46 ff.

13. L. W. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas* (Cambridge: 1956), 66.

14. A. Mingana, *Early Spread of Christianity* (Manchester: 1926), 22.

15. Taken from the Editor's Note from Placid J. Podipara, *The Malabar Christians* (Alleppey: 1972), ii

16. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, (London: 1970), 20

17. A.E. Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas* (London: 1905), 95.

18. Declaring message of Pope Paul VI on the occasion of the XIX Centenary of the death of Thomas, in *St Thomas Souvenir* (Ernakulam: 1972).

19. Thomas Paremmakkal, *Varthamanapusthakam*, trans. By Placid Podipara (Rome: 1971), 80-1, (Hereafter VP).

20. Paremmakkal, VP, 29

day after Easter (Puthunjayar), July third-Dukhrana, December 18 -the bleeding of the Cross-, and November 21 -arrival of St Thomas on the Malabar Coast.

The Four Churches which are Dear and Near to Each Other; The Thomite Bond

The Indian Church of the Thomas Christians is one of the four great Thomite Churches of the East. The three others are the Edessan, the Chaldean (of Mesopotamia or Iraq), with Seleucia Ctesiphon as its center, and the Persian (of Persia proper or Iran). All these four Churches are Thomite in the sense that they looked to St Thomas as to their direct or indirect apostle.²¹ The Church of Edessa believes that the disciple of St Thomas, Addai is the founder of their Church. The Church of Seleucia Ctesiphon is connected with St Thomas through Mari, the disciple of Addai, and that of Persia through St Thomas himself. All these four ancient Churches have an unexceptionally great affinity to St Thomas. This Thomite affinity made them dear to each other. There emerged a feeling of oneness among them basically because of this apostolic rootedness. This made the root clear to an ecclesial solidarity in liturgy and hierarchical communion. This intimacy has been cemented and more solidified through a common liturgical language -Syriac. The words of Cathanar Thomman Paremmakkal are very inspiring: "we are Syrians. From the time of the apostle St Thomas was in our country and gave us the

treasure of the holy faith, we have been until today, without any break, performing our ecclesiastical ceremonies and practices in the Syriac rite. Your predecessors tried their best to change this ancient rite of ours. But they realized they could not".²² Some of the representatives of the Malabar Church wrote to Pope Gregory XIII in 1579 saying: "our prayers are in the Syriac or Chaldean language which was given to us by our Lord St Thomas".²³ Besides these spiritual realms of ecclesial intimacy there are social and political contacts between these four Churches. The centuries old commercial relationship between India and the Middle East, cultural affinities etc., might have naturally propelled the ecclesial relationship. That means commercial and cultural contacts have brought these Churches closer. "The commercial relations between Chaldea and Malabar go back at least to the VIII the century B.C. It is evident from the teak beams etc. found in the ruins of Chaldean Ur. This intercourse continued down the century".²⁴

A Judeo-Christian Ecclesiology

The presence of the Jewish colonies from B.C. 10th century and the arrival of the apostle to his own community naturally lead us to the presence of the Judeo-Christian and Indian Church from the very beginning. "As Christianity had its origin among the Jews in Palestine, the question of the relations between Jews and India before the Christian era and during the early centuries of the Christian era is very important. The Jewish relations with India date back to at least the tenth century B.C. We find

21. Placid Podipara, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians* (Kottayam : 1979), 5

22. Paremmakkal, VP, 247

23. Placid Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 74.

24. Rawlinson, *Intercourse Between India and the Western World* (Cambridge: 1916), 133.

from relevant sources that even as early as the tenth century B.C. the Jews had considerable intercourse with the Indian sub-continent ... From later documents we understood that the Jews had seven or eight important settlements in South India....Thus history tells us that there were colonies in Cranganore, Parur, Palayur, Quilon, Muttom, Chenot etc. It is a strange coincidence that the seven Churches founded by St Thomas in South India are situated in or near these Jewish colonies".²⁵ The seven Churches traditionally ascribed to St Thomas are: Cranganore, Quilon, Chayal, Niranam, Kokamangalam, Kottakkavu or Parur, and Palayur. The Jewish tradition has greatly influenced the liturgy of the East Syrian tradition. "The synaxis was in its shape simply a continuation of the Jewish synagogue service of our Lord's time which was carried straight over into the Christian Church by its Jewish nucleus in the decades after the passion".²⁶

The Indo-Persian Relationship

At a very early age the Malabar Church established links with the Church of Persia proper and then with that of Mesopotamia. It got down its bishops one after another from these Churches from which it shared the East Syriac Liturgy. But it was neither an offshoot nor an integral part of these Churches. It gloried in its own apostolic tradition. Keeping undamaged the East Syriac Liturgy it enriched it by modifying and christianizing the Hindu way of life common to the Malabarians. The St Thomas Christians saw this liturgy as their

own but with necessary and meaningful adaptations.²⁷ Seleucia Ctesiphon was the capital of the Persian Empire that comprised Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Persia (Iran) proper. In the fourth century the bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, tried to put in order the Churches of the Persian Empire after the outline of the Roma Empire. He liked to be the head of all. There was tough antagonism especially from the side of the Persia proper. The latter contended that the Church of Persia proper since it was founded by the apostle Thomas, could not be under the Church of Seleucia Ctesiphon, which had its founder Mari, who was the disciple of Addai, another disciple of Thomas. But slowly the bishop of Seleucia Ctesiphon was recognized as the head of the Church of the Persian Empire. The Church of Persia proper continued to offer resistance to the Chaldean patriarch (of Seleucia-Ctesiphon).

India had strong relation with the Middle East, especially with Persia. Because it was the nearest neighbor. The Metropolitan status of Persia proper, and the belief that the apostle St. Thomas was the originator also of the Church of Persia might have forced India acknowledge the headship of the Metropolitan of Persia proper. Through Persia proper, India was in some way subordinated to the Chaldean Church and to its patriarch. India seems to have profited by the confrontation of Persia proper. The Chaldean Patriarch Iso-Yahb or S-liba Z-cha raised the Indian Church to Metropolitan status and the Chaldean Patriarch Timothy I (8 or 9th cent) took India away from

25. Thomas Puthiakunnel, "Jewish Colonies of India Paved the Way for St Thomas ". In J. Vellian (ed), *The Malabar Church OCA*, (Rome: 186), 191.

26. G.Dix, *The Shape of Liturgy* (Westminster: 1945), 36

27. Thomas Arayathinal, "Vicissitudes of the East Syrian Liturgy in Malabar", *Symposium Syriacum 1972*, OCA 197 (Rome:1974), 413.

Persia proper and placed it directly under him. Thus the directly apostolic Church of India, which was indirectly subordinated to the Chaldean Church and to the Chaldean Patriarch, was directly subordinated to the same Church and to the same Patriarch though the latter Church was only indirectly apostolic²⁸. The Thomas Christians of India do not seem to have had the amenities to expand their own full-fledged ecclesiastical orderliness. The special relation with the Persian Church, which was also found by St Thomas, encouraged them to form part of the ecclesiastical set up of that Church, keeping their own ecclesial identity.

The Holy See of St Thomas The Metropolitan of All India: Principle of Communion

He bishop of India had the name "the Metropolitan and Gate of All India". (In Syriac - metropolita o-thara d-kollah hendo). Gate among the Easterners signifies 'sublime power', or 'sublime authority'. In this situation Gate is of All India (Kollah Hendo), or of the whole India. Hence this metropolitan had a privileged status. He was designated as Metropolitan Bishop, Prelate, and Ruler of the Holy See of St Thomas the Apostle and the entire Holy Church of the Christians of India.²⁹ This is usually known as 'Metropolitan and Gate of All India'. Vatican Codex (Syriac) XXII written in Scengala,³⁰ that is Cranganore, Malabar in 1301 by a deacon Zacharias, one of the disciples of the prelate Mar Jacob designates this Mar Jacob as: "Mar Jacob, being Metropoli-

tan, prelate and ruler of the Holy See of the Apostle St Thomas, namely our ruler and ruler of the entire Holy Church of the Christians of India".³¹ Here we have an ecclesiological rich expression "Holy See of the Apostle St Thomas". This expression is very significant since the See of the Chaldean Patriarch was not the See of the Apostle St Thomas. This is an exact suggestion to the unique apostolic identity of this Church. Again the expression "ruler of the entire Holy Church of the Christians of India" agrees in content with the implication of "the Gate of all India". Here the expansion of the Metropolitan is obvious. It spreads throughout the whole sub-continent without any restriction. Therefore it was not an empty title. It is also a sign to the Christians spread throughout the whole India. The ecclesiological principle inherent in this is that he is the spiritual head of all the various Christian communities in India. The theological meaning of this is that he is the principle of communion. He serves as the link with the apostle and between the different Christian communities. It brings out the fact that a bishop is an ecclesial man. He is the guarantee of the intimate and interlocking relation between the community of the believers and the mystery of Christ. This Indian understanding of the relation between the metropolitan and the Church is similar to that of the early Fathers of the Church, especially that of the Eastern Fathers.

Campori SJ who was in Malabar testified at the opening of the 17th century saying: "according to the information gathered from several books and well-known facts, the bishop

28. Placid Podipara, *Rise and Decline...*, 11

29. G. Mifsud, "Missionary Activity in the Syro-Malabar Church", CO XVII (1996), 180.

30. Scengala or Cranganore was known to the Greeks and to the Romans as Muziris. It was a seaport and a royal city where, Malabar tradition says, the Apostle St Thomas landed and began preaching the Gospel.

31. Cfr, Placid Podipara, *Rise and Decline...*, 15.

of sera (Malabar) was always an archbishop, and the oldest in India. Its archbishops and prelates were always called archbishop metropolitan of All India and its confines".³² About the extension of India, Roz SJ, contemporary to Campori SJ and the first Latin Prelate of the Thomas Christians says: "relying on the authority of an author who lived centuries ago says that Hendo which signifies the same as India extends from the river Indus to the Cape of Comorin".³³ The confines may mean the neighbouring or the bordering countries of India. And so may mean the suffragan Sees of the Metropolitan in question (in Socotra and in Great China).³⁴ The last Metropolitan and the Gate of All India was Mar Abraham (+ 1597). Mar Abraham's residence was Angamale in Malabar, which was also the title of the diocese or archdiocese over which he ruled as a Patriarch rules over a particular diocese or archdiocese like other prelates of his Patriarchate. The jurisdiction of the metropolitan extends to the whole India. He had a kind of autonomy though the East Syrian Patriarch of Mesopotamia sent him. This might be the ground why he was sometimes spoken of as Patriarch. "Though it was not a patriarchate, or Major Archiepiscopate, or Catholicate, it was in some sense all this, except for its dependence on the Chaldean Patriarch, for its Metropolitans and Bishops, even though once these Metropolitans and Bishops were in India their dependence on the Chaldean Patriarch was only nominal, except in matters of very extraordinary as for example the ordination of bish-

ops".³⁵ The Thomas Christians considered the Persian bishops as from their own community because of the linguistic, cultural, liturgical and apostolic affinities. "It seems that the Chaldeans were not considered as foreigners. It was in 1599 that the Chaldean jurisdiction over the Malabarians was done away withThe Malabarians had a great attraction for the Chaldean rule because during the rule they had enjoyed autonomy under the local leaders called archdeacons. They hoped they could restore this autonomy under the Chaldean rule. It was this hope as well as their Chaldean liturgy and their reluctance to be under the Latin rule that were the main reasons for their attraction towards the Chaldean rule".³⁶

Archdeacon of All-India: The Unifying, Co-ordinating and Organizing Factor

The existing historical sources are too insufficient for an adequate picture of the office of the Archdeacon³⁷ in India. The most primitive document that can be traced is a letter of the Chaldean Patriarch Timothy (780-826) addressed to the Archdeacon of India. The Patriarch addresses the Archdeacon as 'the head of the faithful in India'. The Archdeacon is called the 'Jathikku Karthavvian' -the head of the community. Francis Dionysio SJ wrote to the Jesuit General on Jan 2, 1578: "There is in this Christianity, a priest, a native of this country belonging to the Malabar caste, approved for his virtues and habits, and learned and ex-

32. Jesuit Archives, Rome, Goa 65, f.4. The Portuguese called Malabar Serra.

33. Jesuit Archives, Rome, Goa, 65, f. 43.

34. Placid Podipara, *Rise and Decline...*, 16

35. G. Schurhammer, *The Malabar Church and Rome During the Early Portuguese Period and Before* (Trichinaopoly : 1934), 29.

36. Paremmakkal, VP, 199

37. An excellent an well documented study on this matter is: J. Kollaparampil, *The Arch-deacon of All India* (Kottayam: 1972).

perienched in ecclesiastical matters. He knows the scripture and understands and speaks Chaldean. He is esteemed very much by these Christians and before the gentile kings and lords he holds influence and recognition. He is the Archdeacon of Angamale and helps the archbishop, serving him as his provisor".³⁸ In a report of Fr. Valignani SJ: "The archdeacon then affirmed that the whole Christian community of Malabar rested on his shoulders both in spiritual and in temporal matters"³⁹. The great amount of correspondences from Rome addressed to the Archdeacon also shows the central position of the Archdeacon in the Malabar Community. The archdeacon resisted the latinization policy and defended the 'law of Thomas'. The archdeacons were trying to keep the individuality of the ancient Church of the Thomas Christians. He was their lawful authority though there were also bishops sent from Chaldea. He was the unifying, co-ordinating and organizing factor of the Church. Leadership of the Church was in his hands. A document of the 17th century recorded by the Italian Carmelite Joseph Sebastiani OCD: "Among the Christians of St Thomas the position of the archdeacon is next to the archbishop. It is a very ancient privileged position, which comes down in succession from the same family. It is a great dignity as it is according to the Greek Church. There is no other indigenous dignity neither secular nor religious, greater than the archdeacon who is considered to be the prince and head of the St Thomas Christians".⁴⁰

Now we enter into the ecclesial administration among the Malabar Christians. The efficient government of the Malabar Church as we know from tradition and from certain documents of the 16th and 17th centuries was in the hands of local prelates known as Archdeacons. The title of the Archdeacon was "the Archdeacon of All India". Campori SJ says that these archdeacons were always called archdeacons of All India and its confines. "In the Chaldean Church each bishop or metropolitan had an archdeacon for his diocese. But here we find that the archdeacon was for the whole of India and for its boundaries. Hence he was archdeacon of the Metropolitan in capacity of the latter's office as the Metropolitan and the Gate of All India and of its confines."⁴¹ We do not know when or how the office of the archdeacon in question was instituted. In fact the government of the Church was in the hands of the archdeacon. Cardinal Gesuald in 1599 treating the Church of Angamale, after the death of Mar Abraham says: "in the said city of Angamale there is an archiepiscopal Church which has an Archdeacon, and the jurisdiction of the Archbishop used to be exercised by the archdeacons".⁴² All the celebrated Archdeacons were from a family that believed to have received baptism from the apostle St Thomas.⁴³ These archdeacons were unmarried priests.

While the metropolitan led an ascetical life exercising for the most part the powers only of the Episcopal order, the archdeacon governed the whole people who were isolated in several kingdoms that were ruled over by non-Chris-

38. W. German, *Die Kirche der Thomas Christen* (Gutersloh: 1877), 94; Cfr. J. Kollaparampil, *The Archdeacon*, 80.

39. Jesuit Archives Rome Goa-Mal Vol.13, fol. 13 v.

40. Archives of the S. Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, Rome, *Scritti riferitti nel congr.* General. Vol. 233, f. 111.

41. Placid Podipara, *Rise and Decline...*, 17.

42. G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione* (Roma: 1933), 246.

43. Placid Podipara, *Rise and Decline...*, 17

tian kings. The archdeacon enjoyed royal privileges also.⁴⁴ The archdeacon played an important responsibility in the General Assemblies of the Malabar Christians. There was only one archdeacon at one time, even though there was more than one bishop at the same time.⁴⁵ The archdeacon assisted the metropolitan in administrative, social, material and national affairs, but in such a manner that the metropolitan remained as father and spiritual director. Visibly and socially, it is the archdeacon, who came to be considered as the head of the Indian Church.⁴⁶

Palli yogam

(Parish Yogam and Pothuyogam):

Expression of Communion

The Active Participation of the Laity

In the St Thomas Christian tradition the laity was very active. One can note an already developed lay theology among the Malabarians from the very earliest times. Malabar Church can be taken as a model for a practical laicology (theology of the laity). The laity was actively involved both in the Christian life and in the administrative affairs of the Church. The whole Malabar tradition shows that the laity was in no way subordinated to a merely juridical make up of the Church. There was actually no clericalism in this Church. The lay people were not mere appendages to the priests. The Thomas Christians preserved a very glorious sense of the Church as 'people

of God' having only different functions to be performed in the Church.⁴⁷

In Malabar there were parish assemblies (Yogam) consisting of adult males and priests attached to the parish priest. This assembly looked after the good of all those who were ascribed to the Church with power even to excommunicate public delinquents and to decide about their re-admission into the community. This assembly has a say even in the selection of the candidates for the priesthood. Matters that concerned more than one Church of a region were dealt with the representatives of these Churches, while matters of a general interest (social, political and religious), were decided by the General Assembly of the representatives of all the Churches (Pothuyogam). Thus, towards the end of the 18th century, the Thomas Christians formed a Christian Republic.⁴⁸ "The assembly of the adults and priests ascribed to a parish administered the temporalities of the parish and looked after the Christian life of the people. This assembly had the power even to excommunicate public delinquents. Matters of serious nature were dealt with in the joint assemblies of two or more churches or parishes, while matters that pertained to the whole Church or community were treated by the representatives of all the parishes".⁴⁹ There were gatherings of such kind before and after the 'Koonan Cross' oath. The archdeacon keeps a watch over this gathering. It was the Malabar Church Assembly that authorized Cariattil and Paremmakkal to go to

44. Propaganda Archives, rifer. Congr. Part. Della India e Cina, vol. 56, ff. 429, 430.

45. Placid Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, 42-3.

46. J. Habbi, *The Power of the Indian Archdeacon*, *The Harp* 2(1989), 80

47. J. Kallarangatt, "The Ecclesiological Vision of Mar Cariattil and T. Paremmakkal", in T. Vellilamthadam and J. Kuruvinal (eds), *The Freedom Fighters of Thomas Christians* (Kottayam: 1986), 46

48. Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo OCD, *Viaggio Alle Indie Orientali* (Roma: 1796), 137

49. Placid Podipara, *Rise and Decline...*, 18

Rome and handle the affairs of the Malabar Church. "The Malabar Church Assembly authorized the delegates to do anything whatever that would in any way be conducive to the good of the Malabar Church".⁵⁰ If the matter is very great then all the Churches will meet together to handle the case. "Matters pertaining to the whole of the community were not decided by one or two Churches; all the Churches used to assemble together to deal with such matters".⁵¹ Speaking about the Angamale meeting Paremmakkal says: "The gathering of the Churches at Angamale was in conformity with what our forefathers used to do, and it was also in conformity with the spirit of our community".⁵² This is an indication to the traditional practices prevailed in Malabar. Paremmakkal reveals the authentic and authoritative character of the Malabar Church Assembly when he was scolded by the Cardinal of Propaganda for having taken the boys with them (for seminary studies) on account of the advice of the Malabar Assembly: "If the cardinal had known the high standing unity of our people he would have realized that the bishop could not send Syrian boys of Malabar without the consent of our Assembly, or if he sent them, Propaganda could not force our Assembly to accept them should it refuse to do so. If he had known our status he would not have acted as he did, but he would have accepted the boys taking the decision of the Malabar Assembly as authoritative".⁵³

The Malabar Assembly had both the temporal and spiritual powers. Sometimes people misunderstand it as the lay people's right to

intervene in the temporal and financial affairs only. It is more the lay people's responsibility to be genuinely Christian. Basically it was a spiritual force. It is also unspiritual to make a radical distinction between the temporal and spiritual of the ecclesiastical affairs. Its ultimate aim was the maintenance of the Christian life of the Malabarians. It was actually the Christian life of a parish that was the main concern of the parish assembly. Usually it was the parish priest who presided over the Palliyogam.

The charitable works were also performed under the guidance of the yogam.⁵⁴ The general Church Assemblies were practically supreme, and actually no higher ecclesiastical authority questioned their decisions. A manuscript document in Italian kept in the archives of Propaganda Congregation, Rome, says as follows: "In all the Chaldean rite Churches, the Christians handle the ecclesiastical affairs in their respective assemblies. These assemblies consist of the clergy and the people. The matters treated are not only those pertaining to express from the funds of the Church or for restoration or maintenance work but also for promotion of candidates to sacred orders and absolution from censures to be done by the clergy and the people. The bishops do not promote anyone to sacred orders or absolve anyone from censure unless the petitioner presents the recommendation of the community. The community gathered in the Church and having listened the petitioner forwards the request to the ordinary (bishop). In matters of major issues they convoke assemblies of the neighbouring churches; when the matter to be

50. Paremmakkal, *VP*, 17

51. Paremmakkal, *VP*, 33

52. Paremmakkal, *VP*, 32

53. Paremmakkal, *VP*, 35

54. Msgr K. Vancipurackal, "Laity in the Syro-Malabar Church throughout the Centuries", *CO* 5(1984), 32.

treated is very important they call together all the Churches of the particular kingdom and at times of the whole diocese..."⁵⁵

The Palliyogam is something unique among the Thomas Christians of India. This assembly seems to owe its origin to the ancient village assembly, Manram, which was common among the Dravidians. The Dravidians of the sanghakalam (1-5 centuries A.D.) used to gather together to discuss matters of common interest and take decisions on them. The Dravidian culture itself is closely connected with the Christian culture and civilization.⁵⁶ The leaders of the families were members of the Manram. In the same way the Palliyogam also consists of the leaders of the families.⁵⁷

The assembly conserved several features of the ecclesia of the early millennium. It expresses the collegial or the communion aspect of the Church. The Malabar Palliyogams were effective means of maintaining the integrity and communion aspect of the Church. It was an effective means of decentralization and co-responsibility. Co-operation and equality are its main motto. It creates participation on all levels. It is a check to the one-sided monarchical and authoritarian aspect of the Church. Authority is considered here as service. It is an expression of the collegiality and communion of churches. The Palliyogam created a belongingness and brotherliness to each other. There was a strong feeling of sisterhood and brotherhood among the Malabarians. Cardinal Ratzinger says the collegiality of the bish-

ops is possible only where there is brotherliness of the Church.⁵⁸ In Palliyogam the heads of the domestic churches are united together by the head of the local (parish) church. It is a miniature form of the full Church. In the collegiality of the bishops there is the question of primacy, the first one, (cephality and synodality (equality)). In palliyogam too we note this. Even if the majority were the faithful the priest or the archdeacon presides over the yogam. Paremmakkal says: "the sessions were held in the cathedral Church. Cathanar Kuriap Panamkuzha of Kuravilangat, the oldest and one well versed in the traditions, took the first seat; the other cathanars and mapilas were seated in order".⁵⁹ The relation between the head (one) and many has been well kept in the palliyogams.

The Malpanate System: An Ecclesiocentric Clerical Formation

Malpanate system is a Church centred style of priestly formation. The Syriac word malpan means 'guru', teacher or one who is learned. Among the Thomas Christians those who had been giving training and formation to the priest candidates are known as malpans. Malpans are well known scholars in Syriac language, sacred scripture, and teachings of the Fathers. They were saintly people and reputed pastors as well. Malpan is the one who gives wisdom. The Church considers only those priests who are holy and wise as malpans. Intellec-

55. Boniface of the Infant Jesus, *Istoria della Missione del Malabar* (Congress particolari Vol 109(1750), Cfr Vancipurackal, *The Laity...*, 30

56. Cfr. M. Deivanayagam, *Bible, Thirukkurul, Saivasithantham* (Madras: 1984).

57. X. Koodapuzha, "Ecclesiological Perspectives of the St Thomas Christians", 64.

58. J. Ratzinger "Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality" in *Concilium* 1(1965), 54.

59. Paremmakkal, VP, 55

tual, pastoral and spiritual areas are well integrated in their training system. That training was a kind of gurukulam. The student was staying with the elderly and scholarly malpan or guru. The bishop gives ordination to a priest candidate in the light of the recommendation of the Palliyogam, Malpan and Archdeacon. Malpanate system means an ancient system of giving training for the priest candidates among the Thomas Christians. These houses are known as malpanates. Not all the parishes have this kind of training system. Several parishes together took the responsibility of giving malpanate training. In Pallippuram, Poonjar, Palai, Ollur, Karakkunnam, Kuthiyathode, Chathanattu, Nagappuzha, Vadayar, Bharananganam, Changanassery, Mylacompe etc. there were malpanates. During the time of Bernadinos, the metropolitan of Verappoly there were 20 malpanates in Kerala. It is he who stopped this type of training. But soon the western type of seminary system came into existence and it has also become a rule that in order to get ordination the students have to be sent to the seminaries. Thus ended the malpanate system. There was not a definite time limit for the malpanate training. Importance is given to the study of Syriac language, Scripture, especially psalms, liturgy, and moral principles. In this training priority was given to the pastoral orientation. Besides that there were also theological centers in Malabar. "There was a system under which certain Syrian priests called malpans educated in their houses a few youths when they prepared for the priesthood".⁶⁰ They were also greatly in touch with the teachings of the Fathers of the

Church. The main interest of the malpan houses was the preservation and handing of the Thomite tradition and patrimony⁶¹. Fr Carneiro who visited Kerala in 1557 says that there was a very famous university in Angamale.⁶²

An Ecclesial Vision Rooted in an Authentic Spirituality

St Thomas Christian community was a spiritual and ascetical community. Its Metropolitan himself was the best model for the ascetical life style. He was a spiritual man, a man of the scriptures and traditions. The St Thomas Christians' spirituality is vested in fasting and penance. "In addition to almost all Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, the Thomas Christians kept abstinence during the holy seasons which covered almost half of the year and this latter abstinence went along with fasting. Abstinence, especially abstinence on fast days was abstinence from all kinds of food except vegetarian, from intoxicating or alcoholic drinks, from even chewing an aromatic leaf which they used to chew always, and from conjugal life. On days of fast they took only one full meal, and that was a little before sunset. Days of fast were days of special prayers and of almsgiving. All these show that they were practicing Christians. It has to be observed that the obligation to keep the abstinence and fast just mentioned was not an obligation under mortal sin as it was the case among the Latins. In addition to the obligatory fasting, there were more than 70 optional fast days. One of these optional fasts was the

60. G.T. Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore* (Trivandrum: 1901), 32.

61. Koodapuzha, *Marthomanazrani Sabhavijnanakosam* (Kottayam: 1999), 692.

62. X.Koodapuzha,, *Marthomanazrani*... 692-3

fast of 'eight days' preceding the feast of the nativity of Our Lady in September. This fast was and is peculiar to Malabar alone. The European missionaries in the 16th century had only admiration for the Way the Thomas Christians observed fasts and abstinence. The missionaries called them 'sons of fast' and confessed their inability to imitate them.⁶³ The ecclesial spirituality of the Thomas Christians has mystical, monastic and ascetical features. This is closely associated with their ecclesial vision. Or we could say these features constitute the very uniqueness and identity of their Church. It is this life that they considered as the main stem of their ecclesiology. It is a biblical, traditional as well as living spirituality.⁶⁴ "Our tradition (East Syrian) has a complete vision of Christian spirituality. It possesses an immense spiritual heritage, provided by liturgical prayer books, rites, liturgical commentaries, collections of sources of Synods, institutions and living practices, such as monasticism, the organization of the community, manuals, of biblical teachings and commentaries, theological synthesis and works of spiritual life".⁶⁵

Among the Malabarians there were monks. Paulinus of St Bartholomaeus OCD at the end of the 18th century found in Malabar ruins of monasteries at Angamale, Mylacom and Edappally.⁶⁶ Priests were of two classes. One class led a retired life and practiced asceticism without eating meat and drinking wine. Laymen in their advanced age led a kind of solitary life in prayer and penance.⁶⁷

From what is said here it is clear that the Thomas Christians were known for their asceticism. It was deeply rooted in the Indian religious tradition inspired by the saints and sages of Hindu and Buddhist monasticism. The Thomas Christians spent long hours in prayer, strictly followed the fasts, in preparation for the important feasts, prayed in the morning and evening, and went on pilgrimages. Their special devotion of Virgin Mary is unique. Their spiritual life was centered on the temporal cycle, which commemorates the mysteries of Jesus Christ.⁶⁸ The spirituality of the St Thomas Christians was a spirituality practiced and experienced in the whole life of a man through the good religious traditions in the family. The habit of family prayer at the evening belongs to the normal family life of the Thomas Christians. The celebration of the pesaha under the leadership of the head of the family, breaking the bread (kurishappam, Indiriyappam) and distributing it with 'pal' (milk) is something unique found among the Thomas Christians. The Thomas Christians have a spirituality of their own rooted in the scripture, apostolic heritage as well as in the Indian cultural heritage. They had great respect and veneration for the Holy Bible and St Thomas Cross. The Thomas Christians were known as lovers of the scriptures. The traditional Indian spirit and love for meditation and contemplation was a profitable background for the spread of the Gospel message here. St Thomas Christian Tradition is a Church of the saints, martyrs, emi-

63. Placid Podipara, *Rise and Decline*, 18

64. Placid Podipara, *Four Essays on the Pre-Seventeenth Century Church of Thomas Christians* (Changanassery: 1977), 12

65. P. Yousif, "An Introduction to East Syrian Spirituality" in Thottakkara A., *East Syrian Spirituality* (Bangalore: 1990), 62.

66. Paulinus Bartholomaeo, *Viaggio...*, 80.

67. Placid Podipara, *Rise and Decline...*, 19

68. V. Pathikulangara, "The Liturgical year of the Syro-Malabar Rite" EL 90(1976), 1073-196.

nent leaders, ecumenists etc. "They have martyrs and recluses leading a monastic life".⁶⁹ It is said that towards the end of the fourth century there was a monastery of St Thomas containing two hundred monks somewhere south of Baith Katraye.⁷⁰

Liturgical Ecclesiology: A Notable Feature of Thomas Christian Ecclesiology

The Indian St Thomas Church is the best example for the preservation of the ancient adage that the Eucharist makes the Church. A Church *sui iuris* manifests itself mainly in and through the liturgy, especially through the Eucharistic celebration. Every Church has to be faithful to its faith-tradition and its authentic expression, which is the liturgy. The liturgical celebration of the Church is the manifestation of its faith experience in full communion with the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The liturgy, which the Syro-Malabar Church celebrates, is a precious one. The distinctiveness of the Church can be seen in it. One could easily note the Trinitarian, Christological, Pneumatological foundations of an ecclesiology in its liturgical books. It presents the Church typically as a mystery. The mystery of the Church is expressed through types, symbols, figures and allegories. The sacramental aspect of the Church is also well articulated in this liturgy. Monastic, spiritual and ascetical ideals are also there. The love and fear of the faithful towards God is one of the fundamental features of this liturgy. A Church is best expressed at her liturgy. When we participate in this liturgy we experience that ultimately the Church

is of God, of Christ and of the Spirit. In short, one can confidently say that the St Thomas Christian ecclesiology is a liturgical ecclesiology. A Church is concretely manifested in her liturgy. The ascetical, monastic, mystical, and martyriological identity of the Church has to be seen actually in the liturgy of the Church. The normative traits of a Church are rooted in the liturgy. It is to the Church of the ascetics, mystics, monks and martyrs that we commune with while celebrating the liturgy. Again the Thomas Christians are exceptionally blessed with a beautiful Liturgy of Hours. The whole liturgy of the Hours is arranged centering on the Mystery of Christ and the Church. This liturgy of Hours expresses a mosaic of thinking and a galaxy of imageries regarding the Church.⁷¹

The Law of Thomas: A Symbol of Christocentrism and Ecclesiocentrism

IF there is a single expression in which we can join together the Christological and ecclesiological perspectives, that is the 'Law of Thomas'. The Thomas Christian *margam* ecclesiology is meticulously biblical. Apostle Thomas said to Jesus: Lord we do not know where you are going; how then can then we know the way? Jesus said: I am the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14: 5-6). This *margam* (Way) theology is typically Christological in its content. When this is put into practice it has become the brain of a practical ecclesiology. The sum total of the Thomite heritage is known as Thommayude Margam- Law of Thomas.

69. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Typography*, Book III, quoted in A. Mingana, *The Early spread of Christianity in India*, *The Bulletin of John Rylands Library*, Vol 10, 1926, 462

70. Mingana, *Early Spread...*, 438.

71. A recent study on this is: Sophy Rose, *Church as Mystery and Communion* (Changanassery: 1998).

The Law of Thomas actually means the sum total of their Christian heritage distinctively expressed in the life style of their Church. A well-known adage, which expresses the law of Thomas, is that of Placid Podipara: "hindu in culture, Christian in religion, oriental in worship".⁷² It is remarkable to note that by this expression in Kerala what is really meant is the Christian religion itself. By Law of Thomas they meant the customs and laws they had inherited since the time of the apostle Thomas. The Law of Thomas governed the See of Thomas. It is a vibrant expression a living theology and spirituality. It is a theology drawn from its own liturgical and spiritual tradition. Hence we could name it an authentic ecclesiology. It expresses the character and trait of this Church as a whole.

Thommayude Margam includes the whole life style of these Christians. It need not be limited to the written books only. It includes also a mentality to be genuine in Christian life. It presupposes the simplicity of mind and heart. This should not be seen as sectarian movement but as fidelity to one's own ecclesiality. "The St Thomas Christians of India use a term 'Law of Thomas' which adequately expresses the gist of their theological, liturgical, ecclesiastical, ascetical and socio-cultural life style... They considered the Law of Thomas a great patrimony and it was the warp and woof of their spiritual life. The remarkable feature of this Law of Thomas was that it was thoroughly Christian, Oriental and Malabarian at the same time, being well adapted to the socio-cultural

life of Malabar".⁷³ Thoma Margam is the margam who is Christ, it is the sum total of the experience of the apostle Thomas of Christ. It is experienced and lived in the liturgical celebration and day-to-day life of the Thomas Christians.⁷⁴ It is precisely the Mar Thoma Margam which in the gist of St Thomas Christian tradition that makes the Church of St Thomas in India a distinct Oriental Church.⁷⁵ The Thoma Marga, like the Torah for Jews, was the sum-total of the religious discipline of the Thomas Christians. Thoma Marga and Thommayude Niyamam are synonymously used. The Law of Thomas made the Thomas Christians fully at home in the Indian soil both from the religious and the cultural points of view.⁷⁶

An Ecclesial Vision Realized in the Missionary Activity

The Church is by her very nature missionary. St Thomas Christians were always interested in the evangelization and missionary activities. This Church took particular interest in sharing the spiritual heritage and ecclesial faith experience in its distinctiveness and enshrining it in each culture. Ecclesial identity and evangelization are fostered through genuine ecclesial formation. Before the arrival of the missionaries from the West the Thomas Christians have kept a spontaneous taste and zeal for evangelization.⁷⁷ E.R. Hambye says: "for centuries the Thomas Christians of India expanded, thanks to their own zeal, though in-

72. Placid Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, 27.

73. Decree VII of Session III of the Synod of Diamper.

74. Mar Joseph Powathil, Cfr. Mar Thoma Vidya Nikethan News Letter 1(1993), 13.

75. Paul Kariamadam, "India and Luke's Theology of the Way", BB 1(1985), 47-51.

76. Placid Podipara, *The Individuality of the Malabar Church*, 3.

77. Cardinal Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 38.

spired also by the apostolic spirit of their East Syrian brethren. We know that some monks from India went to the Far East, if not to China and central Asia. Thomas Christians during the tenth and eleventh century tried to spread their faith in the Maldiv Islands, and as late as the 15th century, Nairs in Kerala were joining their ranks".⁷⁸ Mar Abraham Mattam gives a detailed account of the missionary zeal of the Thomas Christians.⁷⁹ The East Syrian Church was a Church on fire for its extraordinary taste in missionary effort. It was really impossible for the Thomas Christians to remain unaffected by this zeal. Indian missionaries worked in China, Central Asia, and in the Far East. The Church of the Thomas Christians was somewhat extensive all along the coastal regions on the west and the east. It is definite that Christian communities existed, though perhaps sparingly, on the chief sectors including central India. The Christian missionaries of India proclaimed the Gospel to their countrymen, in diverse parts of the country and spread the faith to China, Maldives, and other neighbouring countries.⁸⁰ Cosmos, an Alexandrian merchant, who traveled extensively and came to India between 520-525 A.D. narrates: Even in the island of Trapobene (Ceylon) in inner India where the India Sea is, there is Church of Christians with clergy and a congregation of believers...And such also is the case in the land called Male (Malabar) where the pepper

grows...And in the place called Kalliana there is a bishop appointed from Persia as well as in the land of Dioscoris (Socotra), in the same Indian Sea...And so likewise among the Bactrians and Greeks and Elamittes, and throughout the whole land of Persia, there is a countless number of Churches with bishops, and a large number of Christians, and they have many martyrs and recluses leading a monastic life.⁸¹ There is clear evidence from 423 A.D. onwards that many of the inhabitants of the island Socotra were then Christians and that they said their fathers had been evangelized by Thomas.⁸² Fr. Hosten in his 'Antiquities from San Thome and Mylapore' says: there appears to have existed in pre-Portuguese India an almost unbroken line of Christian settlements from Sind down to Cape Comorin and Mylapore.⁸³ Christianity was widespread in the whole of India before its Aryanization or Hinduaization. The Saka civilization of ancient India and Saka era started in 78 A.D. is great contributions of Christianity to India.⁸⁴ Dr. M. Deivanayakam pointed out that Dravidianism that existed in the South, outside the realm of Saka Empire, was nothing but Christianity.⁸⁵ "Already in those remote days the Syrians of India possessed genuine missionary spirit, the more so because of was spontaneous".⁸⁶

78. E.R.Hambye, "Medieval Christianity in India", *Christianity in India*, Part I, (Alleppey: 1972), 37

79. Mar Mattam, *The Indian Church of Thomas Christians and Her Missionary Enterprises* (Kottayam: 1985), 15ff.

80. Mar Mattam, *The Indian Church* ..., 15

81. Cfr. Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity*, 461-2.

82. Farquhar, "Apostle Thoms in India According to the Acts of Thomas", in J. Vellien (ed), *Syrian Church Series*, Vol. I (Kottayam: 1972), 48

83. Hosten, *Antiquities from San Thome and Mylapore*, 402.

84. J.J. Morris, *The Sakas of India and the Saka Era*", CO 9(1988), 180-191.

85. M.Deivanakayam, *The Bible, Thirukkural and Saivasidhantham* (Madras: 1984).

86. Cardinal Tisserant, 38.

St Thomas Christians: A Model for Liturgical and Ecclesial Catechesis

St Thomas Christian tradition always insisted on the Liturgical and Ecclesial faith Formation. It was a Christian Community, which practiced this kind of a faith tradition. An ecclesial faith formation means a system of preserving the faith of the Church in an integral way by a constant adherence to the factors that constitute the faith traditions of the Church. The St Thomas Christians may be one of the best examples of this type of ecclesial vision. They had always that strong feeling that the faith of a Church lies in the faith traditions of that Church. We have already mentioned their concern towards Bible, Fathers of the Church, saints, martyrs and mystics. An ecclesial catechism is the best means for preserving the ecclesial identity. Basically, this is the concern for all the oriental Churches. "Canons of the Eastern Churches address that the catechetical directories that need to be elaborated in the patriarchal and metropolitan Churches. It requires that the special character of the Eastern Churches be taken into account in such a way that the catechetical teaching emphasizes the importance of the Bible, and the liturgy as well as the traditions of each Church *sui juris* in patrology, hagiography, and iconography".⁸⁷ The St Thomas Christian community always had given great priority to this type of a liturgical faith formation. "The pre-eminence of the liturgical patrimony is even greater in the eastern Churches because they

have maintained in a special way the primacy of the liturgy as the summit of Christian life, remaining thus completely faithful to the spirit of the Church of the Fathers....Liturgy was the place where catechesis and religious teaching occurred."⁸⁸

St Thomas Christian Ecclesiology: A Model for Inculturation

The Gospel as such is not subject to any cultures. It transcends all cultures. Liturgical inculturation is part of a wider question, the inculturation of the Gospel. Though the Gospel transcends every culture, the Gospel message is lived by a particular people of a given culture. The power of the Gospel transforms the cultures. "The Gospel message takes flesh in those cultures, is embodied in them. The spirit of the Gospel having penetrated through them, cultures are evangelized".⁸⁹ India is rightly described as a museum of cults and customs, creeds and cultures, faiths and tongues, racial types and social systems.⁹⁰ Culture is the life style of a society or people, which finds expression in their social, intellectual, and religious activities and artistic works. Religion and culture cannot be fully separated in the life of a people. Religious beliefs are expressed in a culture. Religion influences and changes the culture.⁹¹

Though this Church is hierarchically related to the Persian Church, the running of the Church and the sacraments were carried out in a way adapted to the Indian life style. The

87. Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescription of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (Vatican: 1996), No. 30

88. Instruction, No. 15

89. Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Rome: 1975), N. 20

90. R. Mukerjee, *The Fundamental Unity of India*, 11

91. Mar A.D. Mattam, "Cultures of India and Inculturation of Liturgy" CO March (1989), 3.

Thomas Christians are Hindu in culture, Christian in Religion, and Oriental in worship.⁹² The Christians of Malabar who are fundamentally of the Dravidian stock are heirs of the ancient Dravidian culture. Malayalam, their everyday language, is Dravidian. The Dravidian culture in India is pre-Aryan. Still, even those of the Dravidian stock are fascinated by the fruits of the Aryan culture, so much so that they neglect their own rich patrimony, which to the Thomas Christians of Malabar is easily accessible in the Tamil classics.⁹³

These Christians have been rooted in the Indian soil and their customs have developed in agreement with the social surroundings of ancient India, and except for their faith and morals, they have been hardly discernible from their compatriots of other creeds. "On its part eastern Christianity has accepted many elements not in doctrine but in religious practices, from India especially from Buddhism. Processions, festivals etc. were a common feature for Buddhists, Hindus and Christians".⁹⁴ "In the family life they are similar to the Brahmins in many ways. On the occasion of marriages they use their ancient privileges. Of all these various Christian communities, old and new, now in Kerala, the ancient Thomas Christians alone had the high privileges of using silk umbrellas (kottakuda), day-lamps (pakal vilaku), walking cloths (pavada), palanquin (antholam), band (pancha-vadyam), lingual cheers (kurava), body-guards and fore-runners to clear the way, elephants to ride on, festal sheds (pandal), ornaments, slaves, the title of mappila, gate houses (padipura), etc. Only the Brahmins and the princes of the royal houses could

use these privileges. As privileges the Syrian Christians were entitled to use them".⁹⁵ There were reciprocal exchanges and improvement. The oriental Christian tradition in India is a fantastic fusion of culture and faith. It is to be observed that India is a multi-cultural land. "A thorough study of the cultural reality of India is a pre-requisite for any meaningful attempt at inculturation. The study should go to the very roots, the origins, the history and evolution of the dominant cultures in India, the contributions of different peoples and races made in the cultural field".⁹⁶ There are several sectors yet to be explored in the field of theology and inculturation.

Concluding Remarks

Thus the ecclesial heritages of the St Thomas Christian tradition are a complex reality. There are many noble thoughts and a sound theology in that. Its ecclesial vision and ecclesiology are interconnected with the various aspects of biblical traditions, theology, spirituality, and liturgy. Actually it is a living spirituality and a practical ecclesiology. Some of the fundamental aspects of this ecclesiology have practically become extinct in the present Syro-Malabar tradition. To my way of thinking, to propose an ecclesiology proper to the present Syro-Malabar tradition, the above said original and foundational aspects of this ancient Church have to be re-established. The lost dimension of the modern systematic ecclesiology can also be seen there to a certain extent. One should not uncritically compare this ecclesiology with that of the post-Tridentine and modern ecclesiology.

Joseph Kallarangatt

92. Placid Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, 27

93. Placid Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, 29

94. Mar Mattam, "Cultures of India...", 134

95. Alexander Cherukarakunnel, "Character and Life Style of Thomas Christians", in G. Menachery (ed) *St Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, Vol 2, (Trichur: 1973), 131.

96. Mar Mattam, *The Indian Church...*, 3

METROPOLITAN CHURCH *SUI IURIS*

JURIDICAL STATUS AND POWER OF GOVERNANCE

Metropolitan

1990 is an ever-memorable year in the history of the oriental Catholic Churches. For, His Holiness Pope John Paul II promulgated The Code of Canons for the Oriental Churches (CCEO) in this year. These Canons came into force from the 1st of October 1991. And at present the oriental catholic churches are governed according to the norms of this code. Here is an attempt to think about the juridical status of the Metropolitan Church *sui iuris*.

1. *Sui Iuris* Churches

A Church *sui iuris* is "a community of the Christian faithful, which is joined together by a hierarchy according to the norm of law and which is expressly or tacitly recognized as *sui iuris* by the supreme authority of the Church" (CCEO 27). The term '*sui iuris*' is an innovation of CCEO and it denotes the relative autonomy of the oriental Catholic Churches. This canonical term, pregnant with many juridical nuances, indicates the God-given mission of the oriental Catholic Churches to keep up their patrimonial autonomous nature. And the autonomy of these churches is relative in the sense that it is under the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff.

According to CCEO the oriental catholic churches are of four categories:

1.1. Patriarchal Churches

The patriarchal Church is the full-grown form of an oriental Catholic Church. It is 'a community of the Christian faithful joined to-

gether by' a Patriarchal hierarchy. The Patriarch together with the synod of bishops has the legislative, judicial and administrative powers within jurisdictional territory of the patriarchal church, without prejudice to those powers reserved, in the common law to the Roman Pontiff (CCEO 55-150). Among the catholic oriental churches the following churches are of patriarchal status: Maronite, Chaldean, Coptic, Syrian, Melkite, Armenian.

1.2. Major Archiepiscopal Churches

Major archiepiscopal churches are the oriental churches, governed by the Major archbishops being assisted by the respective synod of Bishops. These churches also have almost the same rights and obligations of Patriarchal Churches. "A major archbishop is the metropolitan of a see determined or recognized by the Supreme authority of the Church, who presides over an entire Eastern Church *sui iuris* that is not distinguished with the patriarchal title. What is stated in common law concerning patriarchal Churches or patriarchs is understood to be applicable to major Archiepiscopal Churches or Major Archbishops, unless the common law expressly provides otherwise or it is evident from the nature of the matter" (CCEO 151, 152). The Syro Malabar and the Ukrainian churches are the two Major Archiepiscopal churches in catholic communion.

1.3. Metropolitan Churches

The *sui iuris* church, which is governed by a Metropolitan, is called a metropolitan church *sui iuris*. "A metropolitan Church *sui iuris* is presided over by the metropolitan of a determined see who has been appointed by the Ro-

man Pontiff and is assisted by a council of hierarchs according to the norm of law" (CCEO 155§1). The catholic metropolitan churches are the following: Malankara, Ethiopian, Rumenian, Ruthenian.

1.4. Other Churches *Sui Iuris*

Other than the above mentioned three forms of *sui iuris* churches there are some other *sui iuris* ecclesiastical communities. It is "a Church *sui iuris* which is neither patriarchal nor major archiepiscopal nor metropolitan, and is entrusted to a hierarch who presides over it in accordance with the norm of common law and the particular law established by the Roman Pontiff" (CCEO 174). The following oriental catholic churches are of this juridical status: Belorussian, Belgarian, Greek, Hungarian, Italo-Albanian, Slovakian, Yugoslavian, Albanian, Russian.

Thus altogether there are 21 oriental *sui iuris* churches in catholic communion. And Malankara Catholic Church is one of the four metropolitan *sui iuris* churches. In the following lines let us see an enumeration of hierarchical order and canonical competence of the metropolitan church.

2. The Juridical Status of the Metropolitan Church: A Historical Overview

When the Christian church was recognised as the official religion of the Roman Empire the church adopted the organizational structure of the empire. The basic social unit in the empire was a province having a seat of government in a metropolis (principal city). In primitive times Christianity was a religion of the cities. And the bishops of these cities exercised a prominent role in the church, due to the political and

social importance of the cities. Eventually the title 'metropolitan' was attributed to the bishops of the capital cities. And the juridical figure of the metropolitan is retained in the church down through the centuries. (See, Faris pp. 375-6). The oriental code very clearly recognises the juridical status of the existing metropolitan churches.

A metropolitan church comes into being through an act of the supreme authority of the church. Thus says the code, "It is solely up to the Supreme authority of the church to erect, modify, and suppress metropolitan Churches *sui iuris* as well as to define their territorial boundaries" (CCEO. 155 § 2). In the present context the usage "erection of the metropolitan church" can also mean that the existing ones are recognized with their present juridical status.

2.1. The Metropolitan and His Appointment

The Metropolitan is appointed by the Roman Pontiff as the head of the Church *sui iuris* and the hierarch of a determined see. The metropolitan is bound by the obligation to request the pallium from the Roman Pontiff within three months from his episcopal ordination or, if he was already ordained bishop, from his enthronement. The pallium is a "circular band of white wool decorated with six black crosses and is worn on the top of the liturgical vestments" (Faris p.377). It is a symbol of metropolitan power and of the full communion of the metropolitan Church *sui iuris* with the Roman Pontiff. Prior to the imposition of the pallium, the metropolitan cannot convoke the council of hierarchs or ordain bishops (CCEO 156 - § 1,2). The metropolitan has the same rights and obligations of an eparchial bishop, in the eparchy entrusted to him.

2.1.1. The Metropolitan See

Says the code, "The see of the metropolitan Church *sui iuris* is in the principal city from which the metropolitan who presides over that Church takes his title" (CCEO 158§1). The office of the Metropolitan is attached to a specific see. The supreme authority of the Church has the power to designate this see of the Metropolitan. In the case of the patriarchal Churches the code very clearly mentions that the see of Patriarch cannot be transferred without a grave reason. And the consent of the synod of bishops of the patriarchal church and the assent of the Roman Pontiff is required for this transfer of the patriarchal see (CCEO 57§3). But with regard to the transfer of the metropolitan see the code does not give any clear mention.

2.1.2. The Authority of a Metropolitan

The power of the Metropolitan over the Christian faithful of the metropolitan Church is ordinary, proper and personal. The power of the Metropolitan is ordinary in the sense that it is joined to his office. The possession of this power takes place together with the reception of pallium. By the term 'proper' the code means that the Metropolitan can exercise his power in his own right, 'not vicariously as a representative of the Roman Pontiff or the bishops of the metropolitan Church' (Faris, P.379). Moreover this power of the Metropolitan is personal in the sense that "it is attached to the person of the Metropolitan and cannot be entirely delegated" (Faris, p.379).

2.1.3. The Competence of the Metropolitan

As we have seen above a metropolitan Church is a community of Christian faithful formed under a metropolitian hierarchy. The Metropolitan presides over the Metropolitan

Church. The metropolitan is competent to ordain and enthrone bishops of the same Church within the time determined by law. He has the power to convoke the council of hierarchs (a council consisting of all the bishops of the metropolitan Church) according to the norm of law, to prepare properly the topics to be discussed in it, to preside over it and to transfer, prorogue, suspend or dissolve it. He is competent to erect the metropolitan tribunal. He has the canonical obligation to be vigilant that the faith and ecclesiastical discipline are accurately observed in the Church. He can conduct the canonical visitation in eparchies, if the eparchial bishop has neglected to do so. He is competent to nominate the administrator of an eparchy in the case that an eparchy is vacant even after the time determined in the law for the election of the eparchial administrator (CCEO 221, n. 4). If the eparchial bishop, though not prevented by a just impediment, has failed to nominate or confirm, within the time established by law, a person who has been lawfully proposed or elected to an office of the eparchy, the Metropolitan can do so and he is competent also to nominate the eparchial financial administrator, if the eparchial bishop, though warned, has neglected to make the nomination. The code also suggests that there should be mutual consultation and hearing between the Metropolitan and Bishops in the face of certain extraordinary situations of difficulties. The Metropolitan has the obligation "to communicate the acts of the Roman Pontiff to the eparchial bishops and others concerned, unless the Apostolic See has directly provided for it, and to see to the faithful execution of the prescriptions contained in these acts" (CCEO 159 ns.1-8). This power of the Metropolitan over the whole Church *sui iuris*, cannot be delegated to anyone else. The Metropolitan can validly exercise his power of governance

within the territorial boundaries of the Church *sui iuris*. And he acts in person in the Metropolitan Church in all its juridical affairs. (CCEO 157). The oriental code suggests that the Metropolitan is to be commemorated after the Roman Pontiff by all the bishops and other clerics in the Divine Liturgy and in the Liturgy of the Hours, according to the prescriptions of the liturgical books. And the Metropolitan should commemorate the Roman Pontiff in the Divine Liturgy and in the Liturgy of the Hours as a sign of full communion with him, according to the prescriptions of the liturgical books; he should also see to it that this is done faithfully by all the bishops and the clerics of the Church over which he presides.

The Metropolitan, with the consent of the council of hierarchs can also perform those administrative acts, which are committed by common law to the high administrative authority of a Church *sui iuris* (CCEO 157,159). "The Metropolitan is the superior administrative authority of the autonomous metropolitan Church and enjoys the rights attached to that position" (Faris P.391). But the consent of the council of hierarchs is always required for the execution of these administrative acts (CCEO 167&4).

The Metropolitan has the immediate power over the clergy and faithful of the eparchy entrusted to him. The metropolitan is in the role of an eparchial bishop in his own eparchy. He has only the mediate power over clergy and faithful of other eparchies of the metropolitan Church.

2.1.4. The Vacancy of the Metropolitan See

CCEO determines that during the vacancy of the metropolitan see, the eparchial bishop senior according to episcopal ordination is to be

the administrator of the metropolitan Church. And according to this law the titular and retired bishops cannot become the administrator of the Metropolitan Church. The administrator of the Metropolitan Church has to notify the Roman Pontiff as soon as possible about the vacancy of the Metropolitan see. The administrator of the Metropolitan Church has the ordinary power of the Metropolitan. But with regard to the matters, which require the consent of the council of hierarchs, he does not have this ordinary power. According to the norms of law the administrator is not supposed to make any innovation in the metropolitan church during the vacancy of the see (CCEO 173§1-3).

2.2. The Council of Hierarchs

The Metropolitan governs the church with the assistance of a council consisting of all the ordained Bishops of the Metropolitan Church. This council is named with the canonical term 'council of hierarchs'. All the ordained bishops of the Metropolitan Church are by law itself the members of the council of hierarchs. And they have a grave canonical obligation to attend the meetings of the council. If a bishop is prevented by a just impediment, from attending the council meetings, he is to expose his reasons in writing, to the council of hierarchs. After the council of hierarchs has begun, none of those who have to attend it may leave unless for a just reason approved by the president of the council. No member of the council can send proxy (representative) for the council meeting. And no member can have several votes in the meeting. The Eparchial bishops and *coadjutor* bishops have deliberative vote in the council of hierarchs. Unless particular law requires a higher quorum, any session of

the council of hierarchs is canonical and any given balloting is valid if the majority of the bishops who are obliged to attend, is present.

2.2.1. The Legislative Power of the Council of Hierarchs

The council of hierarchs can make laws and norms, without prejudice to the canons in which its power to make them is expressly treated, also in those cases in which common law remits the matter to the particular law of a Church *sui iuris*. The Metropolitan is to inform the Apostolic See as soon as possible of the laws and norms enacted by the council of hierarchs. Laws and norms cannot be validly promulgated before he has a written notification from the Apostolic See of the reception of the acts of the council. The Metropolitan is to inform the Apostolic see also of other proceedings (non legislative) of the council of hierarchs. The Metropolitan is to see to it that the laws of the council of hierarchs are promulgated and its decisions are published.

2.2.2. The Specific Role of the Council of Hierarchs

For the appointment of the metropolitan and of the bishops, the council of hierarchs is competent to compile for each case a list of at least three of the more suitable candidates. The council is to send the list to the Apostolic See, observing secrecy even toward the candidates. The code also advises that in order to compile the above mentioned list, the members of the council of hierarchs, "can inquire of some presbyters or other Christian faithful who are outstanding in wisdom for their opinion about the needs of the Church and the special qualities of the candidate for episcopacy"(CCEO 168).

The council of hierarchs is to take care to provide for the pastoral needs of Christian faithful. It has to take measures to promote the growth of faith, to foster common pastoral action, to regulate the mores, to preserve the respective rite and common ecclesiastical discipline. Here the code specifically determines that all these steps are to be taken in an opportune manner (CCEO 169).

According to the norms of common law the council of hierarchs has to see to the following: provision for the support of the retired bishops (CCEO 211§1), preparation of a specific program of priestly formation (CCEO 330§1), establishment of a seminary for different eparchies of the *sui iuris* church (CCEO 334§1), norms for catechetical formation (CCEO 621§1), prohibition of certain means of social communication detrimental to faith and morals (CCEO 652§2), approval of liturgical texts (CCEO 657§1), preparation of a list of approved censors for books (CCEO 664§1), policy for the administration of sacraments for the non-catholics(CCEO 671§4), distribution of the eucharist by persons other than priests or deacons (CCEO 709§2), reservation of sins (CCEO 727), length of studies prior to the diaconate (CCEO 760§1), reception of a non-catholic bishop into catholic communion (CCEO 898§1, see Faris p.393).

2.2.3. The Time of Meetings and Statutes

It is the prerogative of the Metropolitan to convoke the council of hierarchs. But it is to be convoked at least once a year. And in all special circumstances in which the consent or the consultation of the council is required according to the common law, it must be convoked (CCEO 170).

The council of hierarchs, being distinct from its members is a juridic person. It therefore must have the statutes which precisely deals with its structure and plan of action. These statutes must concern the matters such as "secretariat, commissions and procedures to be employed by the council". The statutes can determine the locations of the sessions of the council. Regarding frequency of the meetings the statutes can make determinations within the time limit (once a year) established by the common law (see CCEO 170). They can determine a quorum for the canonicity of the council meeting. The statutes should also fix the norms for the appointment of the personnel of the secretariate.

2.3. Metropolitan Assembly

Metropolitan assembly is a consultative group of the entire metropolitan church over which the Metropolitan presides and which assists the Metropolitan and the council of hierarchs (see CCEO 172) "in dealing with matters of major importance especially to suit the various kinds of apostolate and their methods as well as ecclesiastical discipline to the ever changing situations of the times, taking into account the common good of the respective Church, as well as the common good of the entire territory where several Churches *sui iuris* co-exist" (CCEO 140). The role of this assembly is to offer its opinion and counsel to the Metropolitan and the council of hierarchs of the metropolitan church. From the above quoted canon we can conclude that the role of this assembly is essentially pastoral. Here the code very clearly states that this role is to be exercised in view of the entire region where several Churches *sui iuris* co-exist.

2.3.1. The Convocation and Presidency

It is of the exclusive right of the Metropolitan to convoke the metropolitan assembly. He

can freely convoke and preside over the assembly once in five years as determined by the common law. But for every extraordinary convocation of the assembly the consent of the council of hierarchs is required. Here it is noteworthy that when the council of hierarchs desires that the metropolitan assembly be convoked the Metropolitan is free, but not obliged to do so (Faris, p.344). The metropolitan is empowered "to transfer the assembly to another location, to postpone or suspend it either for a definite or indefinite period or to dissolve it prior to its pre determined conclusion." When the metropolitan see becomes vacant the assembly is suspended by law itself.

The Metropolitan is the president of the assembly sessions. But he can designate a vice president to represent him during the sessions.

2.3.2. The Members of the Assembly

According to the norms of CCEO the following are the members of the Metropolitan assembly:

1. Eparchial bishops and other local hierarchs;
2. Titular bishops;
3. Presidents of monastic confederations, superiors general of institutes of consecrated life and superiors of monasteries *sui iuris*;
4. Rectors of Catholic universities and of ecclesiastical universities as well as deans of faculties of theology and canon law, which are located inside the territorial boundaries of the Church in which the assembly is held; (Here it is presumed that the above mentioned rectors and deans are members of the metropolitan church).
5. Rectors of major seminaries of the metropolitan church- Here the code does not specify location of the major seminaries. That means even if the major seminary is outside the territorial boundaries of metropolitan

church, its rector is a member of the metropolitan assembly;

6. Each eparchy and exarchy is to be represented in the following manner;

- At least one parish priest enrolled in the eparchy
- One representative of the religious communities
- Two lay persons. Here it is to be noted that the statutes of the assembly can provide for a larger lay representation.

Regarding participation of the faithful of the metropolitan church, living outside the territorial boundaries of the church *sui iuris*, the famous oriental canonist John D. Faris is of the following view. In order to create a truly representative assembly and not simply a regional assembly of the church *sui iuris* the concerns of the faithful outside the territorial boundary of the respective church must be taken into consideration. The code also suggests that the members of other churches *sui iuris* can also be invited for the sessions of the assembly. This participation includes the right to take part in the discussions also. And even the non catholic representatives can be invited as observers of the assembly session.

All the members of the church *sui iuris* who are invited have the canonical obligation to attend the sessions of the assembly. If they are detained by a just impediment, of which they are obliged to inform the metropolitan; however, eparchial bishops can send a proxy.

2.3.3. The Frequency of the Assembly Meetings and Statutes

The Metropolitan assembly is to be convoked at least every five years. But the assembly can be convoked whenever the Metropoli-

tan with the consent of the council of hierarchs deems it appropriate (CCEO 140). The code states that the Metropolitan assembly must have its statutes that contain the necessary norms to attain the goals of the assembly (CCEO 145). They can determine the frequency of the convocation of the assembly, the number and categories of participants and the organizational structure of the assembly. These statutes are to be approved by council of hierarchs of the metropolitan church. The Metropolitan is the one who controls the assembly and he has the power to suspend or even dissolve the assembly (CCEO 142§1).

2.3.4. Participation and Agenda

The lay participation in the metropolitan assembly is based on the following rights and obligations of the christian faithful: the obligation to foster the growth of the church and its sanctification (CCEO 13); the right and obligation to foster evangelisation (CCEO 14); the right to express their needs to their pastors (CCEO 15§2); the right to express the opinion with due regard for the competence of the person and integrity of the doctrinal and moral teachings of the church (CCEO 15§3).

Any member of the metropolitan church can put forward suggestions to be discussed in the metropolitan assembly. But the Metropolitan or the council of hierarchs fixes the agenda of the assembly. Once an agenda is fixed the Metropolitan should allow a free discussion on the issues connected with it. But the participants should take care to respect the church magisterium and fundamental rights of each person.

3. Conclusion

The Metropolitan church *sui iuris* is a community of catholic faithful governed by a Metropolitan who is assisted by a council of hierarchs. On 11th June 1932, His Holiness Pope

Pius XI established the Malankara Catholic Hierarchy by the papal bull *Christo Pastorum Principi*. This bull reads as follows, "We erect a new ecclesiastical province for the Malankara Syrians of Antiochian rite. And it is (comprised) of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum and the diocese of Tiruvalla" (AAS.xxiv - 1932-290). The Archbishop of Trivandrum was endowed also with the title, Archbishop-Metropolitan (See, Mar Beselios P.134). And this special reference is an explicit recognition of the metropolitan status of the malankara catholic church by the Supreme ecclesiastical authority. Thus the hierarchy was established as a metropoli-

tan one. It is noteworthy that the malankara catholic church is specially recognised in the presentation of the Italian version of oriental code, as a metropolitan church of Antiochian tradition (See, George Nedungattu, P.893). Malankara Catholic Church, therefore is a metropolitan church *sui iuris* according to the provisions of CCEO. But it is the high time to rethink about the adequacy of this juridical status for the Malankara Catholic Church, which has a very ancient tradition of "the Holy Synod of the Catholicate which consecrates Bishops and Metropolitans, performs all the patriarchal functions and exercises patriarchal powers."

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I hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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Sd/-
Dr. Thomas Mannorampampil
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BOOK REVIEW

A Book of Blessings and Prayers According to the Rites of the Maronite Antiochene Church. San Antonio, Texas: Office of Liturgy, 1989, 185 pp., hardcover US-\$ 15.00 [to be ordered with St Maron Publications, P.O. Box 010-360, Staten Island, NY 10301, U.S.A.]

We are glad to present the English edition of the blessings and prayers as used by the Maronite Antiochene Church. It is published with the Imprimatur of Archbishop Francis M. Zayek, Bishop of the Eparchy of St Maron of Brooklyn (USA) and shows once again that the Maronite Church is now rooted also in the English-speaking world. The text of the blessings is preceded by a good introduction where we learn that the English edition is a faithful translation of the official text of Bkerke', Lebanon. Changes made in the text have been done with the intention to improve the blessings and prayers, to protect them against certain flatness inherent in the nature of the work, and to capture the nuances and the proper flavor whenever possible ... The changes are concerned with :

1. The rearrangements of parts of the book and their titles : prayers and blessings for people , for example , takes precedence over the other parts and are listed first ;
2. The elimination of tedious and sometimes shocking repetitions of names of animals plagues and diseases;
3. Bringing consistency to the conclusion of the prayer and blessings and adding them , wherever they are missing :
4. Extending the outreach and meaning of the prayers themselves, by providing them with a second look and a fresh reading , but without even touching the wording of the text.

The English version was enlarged by four other prayers and blessings taken from the Vatican ms. no. 312 and five from various liturgical books. The Maronite Church has always been reluctant to separate prayers and blessings from its public celebrations. Therefore we point to the pastoral notes where it is stressed that blessings are reserved to priests and may not be given by deacons or lesser ministers. The time of their administration is at the conclusion of the liturgy before the blessing of the people. The use of the handcross for the dismissal blessing is reserved to the priest. The official prayers and blessings have got the form of a *hussoyo*. They are composed of a *proemion* (*frumyon*) and a *sedro*.

This edition can give much inspiration to all charged with the vernacular edition of liturgical books, particularly in the churches of syriac tradition and therefore merits wide attention.

John Madaey

NEWS

Holy Father Inaugurates the Jubilee Year

His Holiness Pope John Paul II inaugurated the Great Jubilee Year 2000 on the eve of Christmas 1999 by opening the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican. The Jubilee celebrations will last for one year. The door of the Cathedrals all over the Catholic world were also opened by the bishops on the same occasion to mark the inauguration of the Jubilee.

The Holy Father opened the Holy Door at the Basilica of St Paul's outside the walls. He was accompanied by Metropolitan Athanasios representing the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch and Dr George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The ceremony was the opening of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. At the end of the service representatives of 22 Christian Churches and World Council of Churches exchanged the kiss of peace with the Pope and each other.

In his homily, Pope John Paul II referred to the invitation of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. He said the division between Christians "openly contradicts the will of Christ, is a scandal to the world and harms the cause of preaching the Gospel". He invited all to a growing consciousness of each one's "personal responsibility" for historical divisions. The consciousness is indispensable to reach full unity which could be achieved by "conversion of heart, holiness of life, personal and community prayer for unity... a deep capacity to sacrifice that which is personal".

Pope is to Visit the Holy Land

The long awaited pilgrimage of his Holiness, Pope John Paul II to the Holy Land takes place in February and March this year. He will first visit Sinai in Egypt on 25 and 26 February. During that visit Pope may also visit the 4th c. Orthodox Monastery of St. Catherine built on the traditional site of the burning bush. His visit to Jerusalem and other Holy Places will be in March.

Mar Dinkha IV in India

His Beatitude Mar Dinkha IV, the Patriarch of the Eastern Chaldean Syrian Church came to Thrissur in Kerala, India on 19th January for an official visit. The Patriarch was given a very warm welcome by the members of the Church and by the civil authorities of Thrissur.

Mar Varkey Vithayathil C.Ss.R.

Major Archbishop of Syro-Malabar Church

His Grace, Mar Varkey Vithayathil, C.Ss.R. has been appointed by the Holy Father on 23 December 1999, the new Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal Church. He succeeds His Eminence, Antony Cardinal Padiyara.

The new Major Archbishop was appointed on 18 December 1996 as the Apostolic Administrator of the Syro-Malabar Church. His enthronement as the Major Archbishop took place on 26 January 2000 in St Mary's Basilica, Ernakulam. His Grace Abp. Lorenzo Baldissery, the Ap. Pronuncio to India officiated at the function attended by archbishops, bishops, priests, religious and the laity.

Macedonian Orthodox Church towards Independence

Ljupco Geogijevski, the new Prime Minister of Macedonia, has requested the Ecumenical Patriarch,

Bartholomew of Constantinople, in a letter sent to the latter, to grant independence to the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Many expect that the request will be granted without much delay.

Freedom of Religion in Israel

Among strong rumors that Jerusalem is going to be partitioned between the Jews and the Palestinians, the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, has said that partition or internationalisation of Jerusalem is not in the agenda of his government. Moreover, he is quoted to have affirmed his government's commitment to guarantee the right of Christians to freedom of religion, worship and access to the Holy Places. The permission granted recently by the Israeli government to construct a mosque in Nazareth very close to the Basilica had caused much fear and suspicion among the Christians in Israel.

Mother Mariam Thresia to be Beatified

Mother Mariam Thresia, the founder of the Holy Family Religious Congregation for women has been canonically approved as blessed. The Decree to this effect was promulgated in Rome on 27 January 2000. The beatification will take place on 9th April. Mother Mariam Thresia hails from an ancient Syrian Christian family in Puthenchira, India. The Congregation she founded is one of the largest Congregations of the Syro-Malabar Church. Pope John XXIII is also one of those to be beatified.

His Excellency Mar Abraham Mattam Retires

His Excellency Mar Abraham Mattam, the bishop of Satna, India has retired. Monsignor Mathew Vaniakizhakkal V.C. will be his successor. This was announced on 14th January 2000. Ordained in 1972, the bishop-elect Mar Vaniakizhakkal has served the church in various capacities. Since 1997 he is the rector of the De Paul Institute at Bangalore, India.

Satna first became an Exarchate in 1968 and a diocese in 1977. Since its inception, Mar Mattam has been the heart and soul of Satna for 32 years! The new cathedral built in Satna is a sign of authentic inculturation. Unlike many other mission dioceses, Satna can be proud of having a Major Seminary of its own. Hearty felicitations to the new bishop and prayerful wishes to the retiring bishop.

Mar George Panikulam Consecrated Archbishop

Monsignor George Panikulam, the Apostolic Nuncio designate, was consecrated archbishop on 6th January, 2000 in St Peter's Basilica by Pope John Paul II. The new Archbishop belongs to the Syro-Malabar diocese of Irinjalakuda. He has served the Diplomatic Service of Vatican for 20 Years. He was given a warm welcome in his native place on his first visit after the consecration. He will take charge as the Apostolic Nuncio in Honduras soon.

CBCI Meeting in Madras

The CBCI - the Conference of all the Catholic Bishops of India - held its meeting in Madras from 17 to 25 January 2000. The President, His Grace Alan De Lastic, Archbishop of New Delhi, has been reelected as the President together with his Grace Cyril Mar Baselios, the Archbishop of the Syro - Malankara Archdiocese of Trivandrum, as the vice president, for another term. His Grace Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy, the Archbishop of Thirssur, is the new vice president who replaces His Grace Mar Varkey Vithayathil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro - Malabar Church.

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